

# **HOW STELLA GOT HER GROOVE BACK**

**BY  
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**Based on the novel by Terry McMillan**

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EXT. HILLS - SUNRISE

We HEAR a rhythmic BEEPING sound as we see STELLA, 40 and fit, wearing a heart rate monitor, jogging along a scenic trail. She picks up her pace for the last quarter mile. She comes to a stop at a bluff with a spectacular view of the Golden Gate, but because she doesn't appreciate it, neither do we.

1 1/4

INT. STELLA'S OFFICE -DAY

A young ASSISTANT is RUNNING through the floor area of an investment house, clutching her printouts, sprinting beneath the stream of data flowing across the Bloomberg ticker, and into ...

2

...a glass-walled executive office overlooking the City, the Bay, and both bridges. Three other assistants are already hovering around Stella's desk, as she SCROLLS up info on her monitor, talking into her headset at the same time. Everyone, including Stella, is frantic about something, but she keeps her voice a cool, professional purr, at mile-a-minute speed...

STELLA

No, Sidney, GKO's are Russian bonds, they're guaranteeing 65% interest, and their government has never defaulted on one, it's safe, it's a lock, it's 65% on your money, and if you want in for ten million, do it!

7/8

Covers her mike, barks at an assistant...

STELLA (cont'd)

Get me Bill Moore, Skip Regent, I want 200 clients back to back to back. We've got 35 minutes left!

ISAAC (O.S., CALM)

Excuse me...

The crowd parts like the Red Sea. ISAAC is the boss, mature, commanding, knows a great tailor. He leans over her monitor.

ISAAC

You're working the GKO?

STELLA

And yes, it's my day off, I'm late for an appointment and Isaac, I can't break it, or...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STELLA (cont'd)

(into the headset)

Because, sweetheart, they're never  
available to individual investors,  
except this fund just opened with a 2-  
hour window of which 34 minutes is  
left, so speak up, do you want to be  
rich or wallow in regrets?

(smiles)

Whatever I'm taking, you make me work  
for it, fella. Love to Emily....

CLICK off line three. All lights are FLASHING, she  
punches TWO then HOLDS, catches eyes with Isaac.

ISAAC

(very quiet)

I'm in trouble, okay? I need you.

That slows her engine. He's smiling, but he is worried.  
We can see from the frankness of their glances they go  
way back.

STELLA

Let me call you at the end of the d...

ISAAC

I may have blown off Peg Heinrich.  
And I can't wait for the end of the  
day.

Are you going to let me hang? Are you?

STELLA (cont'd)

Be right there.

(to her assistant)

Confirm Sidney at 10 mil, 65%, due  
2/28/99 at par.

INT. SPA - DAY

ANGELA and VANESSA, mid to late 30's, are lying on their  
backs, side by side, covered with white sheets on massage  
tables. Angela's very pregnant. Vanessa's a pretty  
redhead. These are Stella's sisters. New Age music  
playing. Scented candles burning. No massage therapist  
yet. Vanessa sits up.

VANESSA

This is like some shit from the 70's.  
I'm hearing it and I'm smelling it.  
Why'd we let Stella talk us into this  
touchy-feely mess? I don't need no  
massage. And I'm just waiting for

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

3  
cont

VANESSA (cont'd)  
somebody in all white to appear out of  
nowhere.

ANGELA  
For once I just wish Stella could be  
on time.

VANESSA  
Shut up, Angela. If all she had to do  
was sit home all day and sort through  
menu cards or spend her husband's  
money on the Home Shopping network  
during commercials maybe she could.

Low blow. Not fair. But it's true.

ANGELA  
Smart women make smart choices. I feel  
blessed, actually.

VANESSA  
Mama wouldn't think so if she was  
here.

ANGELA  
You don't know what Mama would think  
if she was here so be quiet. Kennedy  
is a daydream come true. He's the  
calmest, sexiest, most honest and  
caring...

VANESSA  
Yeah yeah yeah. Spare me the hard sell  
cause you married him, not me. All I  
wanna know is if you're ever going  
back to work? I mean that is why you  
went to college wasn't it?

ANGELA  
I wish I could keep up with you: what  
are you up to now? 20 jobs in nine  
months? How long are you gonna be at  
this new one?

VANESSA  
Until I get bored. And I know you know  
what that feels like.

Vanessa lies down as two rose-cheeked WHITE WOMEN in all  
WHITE appear at the entrance. They place their fingers  
up to their mouths suggesting quiet please and then walk  
over and place their hands on the Sisters' foreheads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vanessa gives Angela an "I told you this place was weird"-look before closing one eye and only one.

3  
cont

ANGELA

So how's Chantel doing in school?

VANESSA

Don't ask. Right now she's more interested in shaving her legs and begging for acrylic nails than she is in math and English. Grounding her doesn't help so don't even say it.

4  
1/8

When the therapist goes to lift the sheet away, Vanessa snaps it back close to her body and pulls it tighter. Does not close either eye this time.

VANESSA

I just hope Stella gets here in time to enjoy some of this mess. I mean this beauty day was her bright idea. Weren't we like supposed to be bonding or some shit like that?

ANGELA

We are bonding.

VANESSA

Oh.

---

INT. ISAAC'S OFFICE -DAY

Isaac behind his lavish immaculate desk. Stella stands leaning her hands on its polished surface. She doesn't get it...

4

STELLA

So Peg Henrich tells you to buy 15,000 shares of PacBell, and you execute the order. It's up 1 1/8, Isaac, why is that bad?

4  
1/8

ISAAC

It's bad. Because I thought she said 'Hormel'.

Stella blinks.

ISAAC (cont'd)

I ordered her 15,000 shares of Spam. And it's down a half. And she has sorta...freaked.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA

What's the big deal? It's not final  
without a trade confirma...

ISAAC

The point is. She thinks I'm an idiot.  
Wouldn't you?

Well. Yeah.

STELLA

You've been ducking her calls?

ISAAC

Of course. What would I say?

Stella lifts his phone. PUNCHES up a number she knows by  
heart. Gestures to him, turn that monitor around, will  
you? As he does...

STELLA

Margaret Heinrich, please, it's Stella  
Payne, and it's urgent.

PUNCHING up some data on his monitor. Reads it. Ah.  
Thought so.

STELLA (cont'd)

Peg? Stel. I thought we were  
buddies...

(listens)

...well, the next time Isaac slips you  
some hot secret stuff, will you please  
tip me so my clients can get a taste?

Listens. We can hear the SHOUTING. Stella smiles wry...

STELLA (cont'd)

You got it sweetie, a taste of Spam.  
Today's downtick is irrelevant, your  
long term projections are through the  
roof...

(nods)

Third quarter is all about Asian  
market expansion in Hawaii, Japan,  
plus a joint venture distribution deal  
in China that amounts to a license to  
print money.

She smiles at Isaac. -One thumb up.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA (cont'd)

Well, that's how he is, Peg. Saves the big stuff for you and the rest of us get the short straw.

(listens)

How to thank him? I'll get you his guy at Armani. Knows all the sizes.

Isaac mouths: I love you.

---

INT. MUD BATH SPA - DAY

The sisters are now in white robes and turbans, getting simultaneous pedicures and facials, side by side in two reclining chairs. Their faces are caked with ice-blue mud. Hands heating up in white plastic mits.

ANGELA

I'm thinking of introducing Stella to one of Kennedy's golf buddies. He's a judge.

VANESSA

You don't even know what brand of men Stella likes?

ANGELA

Neither does she. So be quiet.

VANESSA

You need to mind your own business. Start by checking the want-ads for a housekeeper and stop being so cheap.

ANGELA

No one knows how to clean my house better than I do. The Judge is very nice.

VANESSA

Which means boring as hell. Anyway, tell him not to get his hopes up 'cause our girl is stuck on stale.

ANGELA

Well, right now, what other prospects does she have?

Stella appears in the entry in her white robe and turban, her face is also blue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5  
Cont

STELLA

None. How was the mud?

VANESSA

We don't do mud. And in case you're wondering: yes, we've been talking about you behind your back. Let's go to the videotape.

Stella makes a face. Loves her sisters. But. She's grown.

STELLA

Yeah yeah yeah. And blah blah blah. Thank you both for reinventing my life. Remind me to repay you someday for everything you've done to clear it all up for me.

1

VANESSA

Don't get cute. Didn't nobody say nothing about reinventing folks. But when was the last time you had a decent date, Stella? Tell the truth.

STELLA

None of your business. When was the last time you paid a bill on time?

Sits in the empty chair next to Vanessa.

VANESSA

Okay. Good point. But. This ain't about me.

STELLA

Look, I came here to chill out. I'm stressing enough at work. I thought you guys were my allies.

VANESSA

I forgot. I am. We are. Did you lose a few pounds? You look good.

ANGELA

Let's not talk about weight today.

STELLA

No let's. Because you look like you're about to drop Dumbo.

And Stella TRUMPHERS like an elephant as she climbs into the empty chair.

(CONTINUED)



5  
Cont

ANGELA  
Shut up, Stella. You know I'm feeling ugly.

STELLA  
(softly)  
If the shoe fits, sugar...

Stella takes her left hand and Vanessa takes the other, and they both squeeze. It's obvious, they're used to babying Angela.

STELLA  
Did you guys remember to send Grandma Ruby's birthday card?

Can see they both have forgotten.

STELLA (cont'd)  
Okay. How about a few measely dollars to Mama's church so some of the Sunday School kids can go to camp? Did we remember to do that this year?

VANESSA  
Everybody's mind doesn't work like yours, Ms. Microchip. Damn. My checks's in the mail.

ANGELA  
Our accountant sends it automatically.

Vanessa tries to make 'Big Deal' face but her mask won't let her.

VANESSA  
Is there anything else Mamasita?

Stella leans her head back and closes her eyes, shakes her head no.

STELLA  
Yes. Don't talk to me for at least two hours.

Another very long silence. And then...

ANGELA  
You need a husband and your son needs a father.

1

(CONTINUED)

5  
Cont

STELLA

Had one. Got rid of him. So happy.  
And in case you've forgotten, the last  
time I checked my ex was still my  
son's father.

ANGELA

Yeah, but he's two whole states away.

STELLA

I should be as lucky as you, huh? Get  
to sit home all day and bake cookies  
while you watch Oprah. What a life.

ANGELA

I chose it. I love it.

STELLA

That's what's so scary.

ANGELA

You still need a man in your life.

Are we starting up this topic again? You asked for it  
Angela, so take this...

STELLA

Just because Kennedy writes directs  
produces and stars in all 3 acts of  
your life don't think everybody needs  
this kind of guidance.

Vanessa's quietly enjoying this. But doesn't dare want  
Stella to get on HER case.

ANGELA

You can be so defensive, it's really  
sad.

STELLA

Well, maybe if you'da listened to Mama  
instead of marrying the second guy you  
ever slept with you'd...

Referee time! Vanessa throws her hands up.

VANESSA

Okay, stop it! Right now! I do not  
feel any love in this room at this  
time!

1

(CONTINUED)

All three women freeze, then lean back in their chairs and close their eyes again. Long silence.

VANESSA

Correct me if I'm wrong, Stella, but this is your treat I hope 'cause you know my money is too funny.

Stella's not surprised. Shakes her head. Smirks. Takes her feet out of the sudsy water. Kicks some on Vanessa. Vanessa kicks some on Angela. Sisters at play.

INT. AIRPORT, BOARDING GATE - DAY

Stella hugs her 11-year old son QUINCY with equal intensity as his flight is now boarding. He gives her a big kiss, not at all ashamed to display affection.

STELLA

And whatever you do, don't say anything about his weight.

Quincy makes his eyes go up in his head.

QUINCY

Come on Mom, give me some credit. Dad never reads labels. Calories fat cholesterol sodium mean nothing to him. My mission is to educate him...

Stella remembers to give him a piece of paper from her pocket.

STELLA

Emergency numbers. If you get lonely. If your Dad's house isn't clean. You don't catch any fish...

QUINCY

Oh I'll catch some, don't you worry Little Mama.

Repositions his Walkman earphones. Seriously...

QUINCY (cont'd)

Mom, what are you gonna do for two whole weeks without your loving son?

STELLA

Clean your room.

Sudden panic.

(CONTINUED)

6  
Cont

QUINCY

Mom please don't go in my room and touch anything! I like it just the way it is!

STELLA

But you can't find anything.

QUINCY

I know where everything is. It may not look like it but I do.

STELLA

What's it worth to you if I don't?

QUINCY

I'll be your best friend.

A tad more tender.

STELLA

You are already are dude.

Smiles.

STELLA (cont'd)

But cash has always worked for me.

Quincy turns to look at her, somewhat hesitant.

STELLA (cont'd)

What'd you forget?

QUINCY

Mom, please try to do something that's fun while I'm gone, ok?

Fun?

STELLA

Sure.

But he's still staring at her. And he's not smiling

QUINCY

I mean it.

Half a beat.

STELLA

So do I.

1

(CONTINUED)

QUINCY

I mean it.

There is love in that. And genuine concern. She can't play this off anymore. Nods. Serious. Okay. So he gives her a little wave, and...

He goes. She blows him a kiss he doesn't see.

---

MOMENTS LATER

...as she waits until his plane backs away from the jetway. He's her Prince.

---

INT. STELLA'S HOUSE - LATER

Stella's coming up the stairs to Quincy's room. Pushes door open with one foot as if someone could be in there. A disaster has occurred inside. She blinks and walks backwards.

STELLA (V.O.)

I'm gonna pretend that this is someone else's house.

And she closes the door very quietly as if something might explode.

---

INT. STELLA'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Stands in her office where piles of work await. Can't. Not today. Titles of books become blurry. Looks outside to the abandoned guest house in need of repair. Places her face in her palms. The pool is calm but not in a swimming mood. She's bored already.

---

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

LEROY, late 40s, Tom Selleck-type, is stroking Stella's hair. Her head's on his chest, duvet pulled up over her shoulders. It's clear their lovemaking is over, and Stella looks sad, as if she's pondering over something and has figured out how to say it, but...

LEROY

Since Quincy's gone, can I stay over?

Shakes her head.

STELLA

Leroy. This is not a good time.

(CONTINUED)

9  
cont

LEROY

But I showed you the papers. I filed.  
I'm out of the house.

She lifts her head. Didn't mean to say this but...

STELLA

How long have we been doing this?

LEROY

This?

STELLA

Bailing each other out when we get  
lonely?

LEROY

Don't go there, Stella. I'm flying  
down tomorrow to the Securities  
convention which I don't know how you  
got out of, but it would be great if  
you could join me. I can blow off two  
afternoons. Come on.

She just stares at him.

STELLA

Did you not hear me?

LEROY

Come on baby, I already have your  
ticket and I told Isaac you might need  
a break.

She sits up now. Pissed.

STELLA

You have no right discussing my  
personal life with Isaac, I don't care  
how chummy you guys are on the course.

LEROY

You saved his ass. He owes you.

STELLA

Leroy we're friends. Good friends. And  
we're not in love.

LEROY

Don't say that, baby. You know I love  
y...

(CONTINUED)

9  
Cont

STELLA

...why don't you go out and find a woman who'll love you the way you deserve to be?

A dose of real that he can't play off at first. Then...

LEROY

Well, in the meantime, how about twenty more minutes?

She smiles at him affectionately.

STELLA

Goodnight Leroy.

And she kisses him on the forehead, wraps the duvet around her and goes into the bathroom. HOLD on Leroy.

LEROY

You're in a funny mood tonight.

STELLA (O.S.)

Yeah, I guess I am.

---

EXT. FAMILY ROOM - AFTERNOON

10

Stella's sitting on the floor, leaning against an amazing-looking sofa, staring half-heartedly at the long-overdue project: making stacks from a pile of hundreds of PHOTOS while she looks up at the TV. What is this mess? Drops a photo of a MAN and a younger QUINCY on the floor, but STOPS when she sees a white couple lying on a white sandy beach, drinking something orange and frosty. Stella sits up straighter at the baritone voice.

VOICE (O.S.)

Need to get away from it all? Need to recharge your batteries? Spend some time in the sun, Mon? Then, come to the beautiful island of Jamaica.

---

She's staring at the couple so hard that the white woman begins to metamorphose and turn brown and then looks just like Stella and when the phone rings Stella's startled and chuckling....

---

10A

STELLA

Hello.

Does not recognize the voice.

10 B

(CONTINUED)

VOICE (O.S.)

Yes, Stella. This is Judge Spencer Boyle. Your sister, Angela gave me your number. Said you'd be expecting my call.

Her eyes are still glued to the TV. She is being seduced by the images. Listening with one ear.

STELLA

(trying to sound sincere)  
Nice of you to call Judge Spangler.

JUDGE BOYLE (O.S.)

Please, call me Spencer. I was hoping maybe we might...

The voice on the TV is beckoning...

STELLA (cont'd)

(to herself)  
Oh, why not?

He laughs.

JUDGE BOYLE (O.S.)

Well that gives me a lot of options. Why don't we start with dinner next week?

She is totally surprised when she hears herself say...

STELLA

Oh, I can't next week. I'll be in Jamaica.

Covers her mouth. Yep. That's what I just said.

JUDGE BOYLE (O.S.)

Wonderful. Then how about a rain check, in say two weeks?

Eyes glued to the screen. The woman is eating a mango.

STELLA

Delicious.

JUDGE BOYLE (O.S.)

It's very refreshing to find a young woman who doesn't start out playing hard to get.



100  
contin

Stella blinks. Tries to reenter this conversation.

STELLA

Yeah, that's me. I'm easy.

JUDGE BOYLE

Well, I didn't mean to offend you. I only meant that no games are kind of refreshing.

STELLA

It certainly looks like it.

JUDGE BOYLE

I hear you're an athlete. Maybe we could go running together sometime.

---

Now the woman on the beach walks slowly into water, rolls over on her back and floats.

---

STELLA

Looks like just what I need.

---

EXT. POOLSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

She IS PUNCHING numbers and does a little aerobic dance with her feet suggesting her impatience and then we see her disappointment.

STELLA (cont'd)

Delilah! Where are you, girl! I've got a brilliant idea. Let's go to Jamaica! Are you game or lame? Call me back ASAP.

Hangs up. Terror-stricken look appears out of nowhere. What am I doing? Presses REDIAL.

STELLA

It was just a stupid one minute fantasy. Delilah, forget the message I just left. I don't have time to go to Anybody's Anywhere. Got too much on my plate. Sorry girl.

And she hangs up the phone. Phoenix, the dog, is now sitting outside the french doors wearing the expression: How busy are you again? Run that by me again, please!

STELLA

Don't look at me like that, I do!

(CONTINUED)

He turns to walk away and she stalks off.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Stella's lying in a hammock under a shade tree reading. Phoenix is in the pool retrieving a toy she's thrown in for him. The portable rings.

STELLA

Hello.

DELILAH (O.S.)

Bertha! I'm ignoring your second message altogether so start packing your shit!

STELLA

D!

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. SOHO - DAY

DELILAH, 40ish, crosses a busy Soho street, past a sea of yellow cabs, cell phone in one hand and a big old cookie in the other. She's headed toward an ART GALLERY down the way.

DELILAH

We're going to Jamaica and don't t...

STELLA

I really don't think I can get the time off...

Taking a big bite out of the cookie ...

DELILAH

Oh bullshit. You haven't been anywhere or done anything since Hell froze, so don't give me this mess. I know you can get a week. Just tell 'em.

STELLA

I'm not sure. I've got a deadline on this shareholder's rep...

DELILAH

Oh let somebody else fucking share without you: Quincy's babysitting his daddy and you don't have nothing else on your Things To Do list so...

(CONTINUED)

13  
Cont

STELLA

...That's easy for you to say, they've got tons of package trips from New York, but from California I've gotta pay retail.

DELILAH

Oh, don't be so cheap, Stella. Spend the damn money! You make enough. And you're worth it. And if you're not, I am. And you're going with me. So...

5/8

STELLA

I feel truly blessed to have this opportunity to be in your presence.

DELILAH

...Just don't get all jealous when you see me, but I'm warning you: I've lost a couple of pounds.

STELLA

A couple.

DELILAH

You watch. Those Jamaican dudes are gonna be chasing my scrawny butt all over that island while you're waiting for the leftovers. Bye girl.

CUT TO:

STELLA'S BACKYARD:

Stella covers her face with the book, then takes it away, tosses it on the grass, gets out of the hammock and jumps into the pool.

14

8

EXT. MONTEGO BAY AIRPORT - DAY

15

Stella emerges with braids. Looks out at the lush mountains, emerald water and about 30 Jamaican men waiting by the terminal entrance. As she gets close to them, they seem to make a path for her to enter.

MEN

(all together)

Welcome to Jamaica!

2/8

Stella just grins until she reaches an old RASTA DRIVER holding a placard for the CASTLE BEACH RESORT. He smiles like an angel...

INT. VAN - SERIES OF ANGLES - LATE AFTERNOON, DUSK

...but drives like a maniac! Stella and a half a dozen white tourists are on Mister Toad's Wild Ride at high speed on a 2-lane blacktop with potholes, goats, cows, bikes and other crazy drivers along the way. A succession of REGGAE DANCE HALLS threaten to split eardrums. The Driver shouts PATOIS out the window, LAUGHS at every near miss. Stops to pick up an ANCIENT WOMAN hitchhiking. Makes the outraged tourist make room for her.

The hitchhiker's unrefined beauty, the spirit and history of the long-ago trip from Africa in her eyes, her poise and grace as she sits down across from Stella which causes Stella to STARE until something is aroused in her that allows her to SEE THROUGH the WINDOW at just how rich the land and people are. That another world exists apart from her own. School kids in uniform are laughing on the way home. Lovers under weeping willows holding hands and making plans for tonight.

Stella is slowly intoxicated by it all, as the van travels past spectacular VISTAS on the road to Castle Beach.

EXT. HOTEL LOBBY - COCKTAIL HOUR

Off camera we hear a long and loud SCREAM. Stella turns around and here comes Delilah running towards her. Big hugs and kisses...

DELILAH

I've been sitting at that bar for an hour and a half waiting for you, girl.

STELLA

Then where's my pina colada? You know I could use one.

A waiter comes over with a tray of drinks and Delilah waves goodbye see you later tomorrow or whatever to two HUNKS who'd been sitting next to her at the bar. Hands Stella her drink.

DELILAH

Wave to Jack and Buddy.

Doesn't even turn around.

STELLA

I'm not waving to anybody I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

17

4/8

DELILAH

You will. They're from Chicago by way of L.A. 3 Superbowl rings between them. I get Jack. You get Buddy.

Stella almost chokes on her drink.

STELLA

Oh no you didn't. Look. I didn't come down here to turn into a slut.

DELILAH

I did.

Looks out as far as she can at the ocean.

STELLA

I just wanna run read relax and roll over. Not pick up old football players.

DELILAH

When was your last wide receiver?

Stella just stares at her.

STELLA

It's good to see you, girl.

Quietly.

DELILAH

Are you okay, girl? Are you good?

STELLA

Better than you.

And Delilah throws her arms over Stella's shoulders and they head off...

CUT TO:

18

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Stella's unpacking. 3 bags: unzipping garment bag on the bed; large suitcase on the floor, smaller one next to it is full of shoes. Delilah's lying down on a corner of the bed, watching.

2/8

DELILAH

I'm staying a week, but I guess you plan on moving here, huh? Did you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DELILAH (cont'd)  
bring enough shit to wear or what?  
What's that?

Points. Stella holds up a sheer bathing suit cover.

STELLA  
This?

DELILAH  
Gimme gimme gimme. Don't try to hide  
what you know looks like my name's on  
it.

Stella tosses it in her face. Delilah jumps up from the  
bed, slips it on.

DELILAH (cont'd)  
Where's the bathing suit that goes  
with it?

STELLA  
You better sit your butt down and be  
happy I'm letting it go for fifty.

DELILAH  
I got your fifty. You look good,  
Stella.

STELLA  
That's because you can't tell good  
from spectacular.

And Stella tosses her the bathing suit. Delilah holds it  
up. Pulls and stretches it in every direction. Throws  
it back.

DELILAH  
They need to put more lycra in these  
things. Let me just say this. As your  
closest and most loving friend for 22  
years. Can I have these?

Stella looks down at her favorite pair of mules.

STELLA  
Hell no.

Stella gets out her jewelry and starts spreading it out  
on the dresser.

DELILAH  
Will you at least find me a picture of  
my godson?

(CONTINUED)

While Stella's back is turned, D grabs a pair of gold hoop earrings up to her ears. Not even turning around...

STELLA

Now those you can have.

DELILAH

That must mean these babies are fake.  
Ask me if I care?

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

They're trying to decide from the long buffet which has been set up on the beach. D's wearing the earrings, dress and shoes. Stella puts chicken on her plate.

DELILAH

That must be jerk chicken.

STELLA

They jerk everything down here.

DELILAH

Remember that dance?

And she starts 'jerking' her elbows up and down. Stella looks around, hoping no one's watching. The same two HUNKS do, and they begin to IMITATE D's moves at the bar along with BIG waves. D nods hello, puts something bland on her plate and Stella looks at them like their idiots. They find an empty table...

DELILAH

I need to hurry up. I'm tired.

STELLA

Probably jet lag.

DELILAH

I wish. I think my blood sugar is low.  
I've been taking that ginko stuff and ginseng, to put some pep in my step.

STELLA

When was the last time you had a physical?

Thinks about it.

DELILAH

A year ago. I guess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

19

STELLA

Then get one and stop diagnosing yourself.

Delilah's been thinking the same thing herself.

DELILAH

I will. As soon as I get home.

STELLA

All I know is this: when I knock on your door in the morning, have your sneakers on and be ready to run.

DELILAH

I'm gonna be honest with you: Hell no! I did not come down here to exercise. You think you're cute with your little braids, don't you Stella?

STELLA

I am cute. You like 'em?

DELILAH

They make you look entirely too young.

Stella shakes her head as begin to eat. It seems that everywhere D turns, MEN are smiling at them.

DELILAH

Damn, if I'da known it was gonna be raining men down here, I'da made this my annual vacation spot a long time ago.

(voice changes to Arnold S.)

I'll be back.

---

EXT. HOTEL ROOM/BEACH - EARLY MORNING

Stella's in a LIME GREEN SPEEDO running shorts/bra top, finishing her stretches and next to her is D, faking like she's bending and reaching over. She looks like she's still asleep! And as soon as Stella starts off with a slow trot, behind her D has an Oh Hell look on her face. She tries to imitate Stella, but it's clear this isn't going to work. D STOPS. Stella's continues.

DELILAH

(yelling)

I'll meet you at breakfast!

(CONTINUED)



20 18  
Stella throws her hand back at D, who's already heading back to the room.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - MORNING

21  
She's looking around for Delilah. No sign of her. Most of the tables are full. Spots an empty one. With her towel, she's wiping the sweat from her forehead, chest, shoulders with her eye on the buffet line as a young black KID in his early 20s at the next table watches her EVERY move. Stella does not notice him as she drops her "gear" on table, gets waffles and fruit from the long picturesque buffet. She sits back down and smells something wonderful, apparently coming from close by. It's him, in a baseball cap, T-shirt, typical hip-hop-look, and she thinks maybe she's seen him before until he turns to her and says in a Jamaican accent...

YOUNG MAN

(friendly and shy at once)

Hello.

She is a little knocked out by the beauty of this young man but tries to play it off. She leans over. 7/8

STELLA

Are you a rapper?

He offers a big wide sexy grin and Stella looks as if she could melt. Is immediately embarrassed by her reaction and once again, tries to clean it up. He doesn't notice but bends in her direction and says...

YOUNG MAN

No. Sorry. I don't rap.

It takes Stella more than a few seconds to catch her breath when she sees him face to face. He is too fine. Thick eyebrows, cheekbones, succulent lips, which Stella can't seem to take her eyes off. Stops herself and turns her attention back to those stupid waffles.

STELLA (V.O.)

Lord have mercy. Why don't they come in this make and model in my age group?

YOUNG MAN

Excuse me. Are you dining alone?

(CONTINUED)

Stella acts as if he overheard her thoughts. Relieved he couldn't have. But now she's surprised by this question. With a slight protectiveness...

STELLA

Why?

Smile is warm.

YOUNG MAN

Would you mind if I joined you?

STELLA

No. But my plate looks lighter, maybe I should come to your table.

He chuckles, and when he picks his plate up, pushes the chair and stands, Stella is totally taken aback: he's about 6'4, lean and hairy, hands like mits, a living sculpture. Stella sits up straight, utters to herself...

STELLA

There ought to be a law against being this young and fine and so very sexy. I'm here to testify.

YOUNG MAN

Excuse me?

He sits down across from her, sets plate down. She takes a sniff.

STELLA

I said whatever it is it sure smells good.

YOUNG MAN

(shyly)

I think it's my cologne. It's new.

STELLA

I meant the food.

He's embarrassed.

STELLA (V.O.)

I meant the cologne.

He's looking her up and down now.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG MAN

You're certainly the most colorful person I've seen this morning.

STELLA

You got a problem with green?

YOUNG MAN

Yes. I'm in therapy for it. Are you enjoying your first morning in Jamaica?

She smiles.

STELLA

Maybe I've been here for weeks.

YOUNG MAN

I would've noticed.

STELLA

Oh, really.

STELLA (V.O)

I know he doesn't call himself flirting with me. This is too cute.

STELLA (cont'd)

What's your name young man?

He smiles wide. He is flirting...

YOUNG MAN

Winston Shakespeare. And yours young lady?

STELLA

My name's Stella, Winston.

WINSTON

You gave me one name. I gave you two.

STELLA

The one I gave you was real, Mr. Shakespeare.

WINSTON

You didn't know Shakespeare was really black?

Said so straight, she blinks.

(CONTINUED)

21  
cont.

WINSTON (cont'd)  
Socrates, too.

Now she smiles.

WINSTON  
Where's your husband?

What?

STELLA  
What makes you think I have one?

He looks pleased by her response.

WINSTON  
Boyfriend?

STELLA  
You sure ask a lot of questions to be  
so young. Where are your parents?  
And how old ARE you, Winston?

He sits back so she can look at him.

WINSTON  
My parents live 40 miles from here.  
How old do you think I am?

STELLA  
Twenty...five.

He's flattered to death. No one's apparently ever  
guessed that high. Looks at her with dreamy eyes as if  
he's hoping this will impress her...

WINSTON  
I'll be twenty-one on my next  
birthday.

Her mouth drops open a little.

WINSTON (cont'd)  
That makes me twenty.

Stella drops her fork on top of her waffles.

STELLA (V.O.)  
He's not even legal.

WINSTON  
And you are?

(CONTINUED)

21  
(cont)

STELLA

Forty.

His eyebrows go up.

WINSTON

Truthfully.

STELLA

Oh don't even go there.

WINSTON

You look good. I've never seen a 40  
year old woman who looks like you.

STELLA

(dryly)

Thanks.

He looks a little worried, as if he knows he just said  
something wrong and doesn't know what to do about it.

WINSTON

So, what made you come to Jamaica?

STELLA

I needed a vacation. And why are you  
here?

WINSTON

Well, I just got a degree in biology,  
and I don't know what to do with it.  
In the meantime, I'm going to learn to  
be a chef.Stella's taking it in. It's those lips again. Now it's  
his hands. It's all too ridiculous. She pushes herself  
away from the table and...

STELLA

Well that's nice. Winston is it?

He looks alarmed that she's leaving.

WINSTON

You haven't finished your breakfast.

STELLA

Yes I have.

She stands up. He looks at her and decides to ask...

(CONTINUED)

21 cont

WINSTON

Are you going to the pajama disco tonight?

STELLA

The what?

WINSTON

You're supposed to wear bed clothes - something you sleep in. And we party. I mean. You know. Dance.

STELLA

You can't be serious.

WINSTON

It's your first night here, and besides. I'd love to dance with you.

STELLA

Oh really. Well in case you haven't noticed, Winston. I'm old enough to be your mother.

He just grins.

STELLA (cont'd)

What?

WINSTON

I'm just thinking about that. I'll meet you there at ten, okay?

STELLA

I don't think so, Winston.

He's undeterred.

WINSTON

Well, I'll be there anyway, watching the door, hoping you'll change your mind.

She has to smile at that.

STELLA

Nice meeting you, Winston.

And he nods again. Same here, like he's a real man or something and as she turns to walk away Stella can feel his eyes on her, and indeed they are. She's glad her

(CONTINUED)

back is turned. She's downright tickled. Haven't seen her like this before: giddy and all shook up.

---

UNDERWATER SEQUENCE

Stella is a chocolate mermaid among the neon sea life.

---

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Stella comes up to the surface and swims to shore. Delilah, with the two hunks we've seen already - JACK and BUDDY - are waiting and waving. Delilah's in a 1-piece suit, carrying on like she's Ms. Jamaica. She hands Stella a towel.

DELILAH

Buddy and Jack. This is my best friend Stella.

BUDDY

You know Stella, I was just laying here thinking about how I could put a smile on Quincy's face.

Stella blinks. Quincy?

BUDDY

I thought maybe he would like a football autographed by say, Michael Irvin and Emmitt Thomas. I figured being a high-powered financial wizard and all, you probably don't get the chance to take him to as many ballgames as you might like.

Stella cuts a look at D.

STELLA

I hope you didn't forget to tell him that I was in 4-H way back when and how my favorite heiffer won me a gold ribbon.

D is busted for her big mouth. Stella turns to Buddy.

BUDDY

Now, Miss Stella...

DELILAH

Shutup, Buddy. Go back to sleep.

(CONTINUED)

23  
Cont

JACK

You tearing that bathing suit up Ms.  
Delilah.

Delilah is flattered. Rolls over on her belly, kicks her legs up like she's Marilyn Monroe or somebody.

DELILAH

Jack, would you rub some oil on my  
back, please?

She can hardly get the words out of her mouth and he's there. Delilah loves this shit. Stella, on the other hand, covers her belly with her arms in her 2-piece, which she fills out nicely - hoping Buddy doesn't get the same notion which is why she pulls the empty chase next to him a little further away before lying down.

DELILAH

We're going to Rick's Cafe tonight.  
It's the spot that has the best  
sunsets and Lobster on the island.  
What's a good time for you?

Buddy rolls over on his side to see her response and give her what he thinks is an alluring look.

BUDDY

Yeah, wear something to show off those  
pretty bronzed shoulders. You wearing  
sunblock down here, baby?

STELLA

Yes I am Buddy and thanks for asking.  
And as far as tonight goes, I'm not  
sure.

DELILAH

What do you mean 'not sure'? Don't dud  
up on our second night here, Stella.

STELLA

I'm feeling tired.

JACK

From what? Swimming?

DELILAH

I told you all that jogging's not  
worth it down here. Dang, Stella.  
Take a nap before we go. It's hours  
from now.

(CONTINUED)



STELLA

Bring me back a doggie bag.

Delilah doesn't trust her right now. Out of the corner of her eye...

DELILAH

Did I miss something at breakfast?

STELLA

Yep. Waffles and red grapefruit.

Stella begins rubbing oil up and down her legs. Buddy watches her, but she looks straight ahead at the water.

---

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SERIES OF SHOTS - DUSK TO NIGHT

Stella's listening to Maxi Priest on the room's small stereo as she goes through her suitcase trying to figure out what to wear. When she starts holding up a series of long pj's, cotton T-shirts, etc., we know exactly where she's decided to go. She finds a thin gown with scalloped lacing around the neckline. Holds it up to the light. It's a little too sheer. Tosses it.

STELLA

This whole thing is ridiculous.  
You're too old for this shit.

She moves to the balcony. Breeze is nice. Waves are mesmerizing. Maxi singing 'Around Midnight', real islandy, makes her move. Maybe she's not too old afterall.

---

INT. DISCO - SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

Stella, looking shy and embarrassed in her gown, is greeted by two hosts, NORRIS and ABBY at the entrance. The room itself is dark, lit by purple neon light and the music is loud thumping and mostly white honeymooners in bustiers G-strings teddies boxers and bikini's and are on the dance floor. Stella's overdressed and knows it. Still. Looks for Winston through the crowd, but no luck. Disappointed.

WINSTON

(from behind her)

I'm glad you came.

She turns around. Can see her exhale.

THIS IS NOW NINT  
EXTERIOR 25  
LOCATION  
PER  
DIRECTOR  
COMMENT

(CONTINUED)

WINSTON (cont'd)

But you're late.

He smiles at her. Diana King's song, SHY GUY is blaring.

STELLA

How can I be late to something I never said I was coming to.

WINSTON

Well, I've been waiting for you to walk through that door since quarter to ten.

Now, he simply takes her by the hand and leads her to the dance floor. Why not? He's smiling at her as if he's thinking about something or has some secret. He's also not in pajamas: shorts and T-shirt.

STELLA

How'd you get in here wearing that?

WINSTON

I had my T-shirt balled up in my hand.

STELLA

Why'd you put it back on?

WINSTON

I don't know. Maybe I'm just a shy guy.

He grins and Stella gets it as this is the name of the song playing.

WINSTON (cont'd)

That's a pretty nightgown.

STELLA

Thanks, but I feel overdressed.

WINSTON

Don't.

The beat changes. Mood is slow. It's all about love. Winston turns his palms out hoping she'll accept this dance but Stella's not sure she wants to get this close. but he goes over to her and slowly smoothly pulls her inside his arms where we can see she likes the feel of

(CONTINUED)

him. We HEAR and see them continue dancing through BITS of 3 other love songs...

CUT TO,

LATER:

The dance floor and the whole place is even more crowded now. Everyone's buzzed out of their mind. This is vacation as it should be. Winston and Stella have not sat down, both sweating and dancing to SEAL's "Crazy". Stella seems inhibited, feeling that every guy in here is staring at her ass, which is half right. Noticing this...

WINSTON

It's nice that you're self-conscious.  
Why don't you wrap that jacket thing  
around your waist?

Good idea. Stella does it. Gets looser as the BEAT pulsates. Winston's showing her how to do the Jamaican BUMP and GRIND dance and she's got the hang of it when Delilah enters with Jack and Buddy in tow. Delilah tells the guys to wait here, and marches through the crowd to where Stella and Winston are dancing.

DELILAH

And just what do you think you're  
doing?

WINSTON

(politely)  
She's dancing with me.

DELILAH

And you are?

STELLA

None of your business.

DELILAH

It is my business. We came down here  
to have a good time together and you  
diss me and our dates to go dancing  
with some juvenile hiphopper.

STELLA

Who you know nothing about.

DELILAH

And you do.

(CONTINUED)

Still dancing, Winston turns to Delilah with a direct and honest smile.

WINSTON

She knows she likes me. She doesn't know how much. Or what she wants to do about it. But for right now, it's enough.

Turns to Stella.

WINSTON (cont'd)

Isn't that right?

Stella looks at him just a little differently than she had before. Smiles.

STELLA

Yes, Winston. That's right.

They continue dancing as if they're alone in the room.

---

LATER:

The music is LOUDER now, bass pumped UP, a host grabs the mike and SCREAMS...

ABBY

DOES EVERYBODY WANNA GET CRAZY?

They do.

ABBY (cont'd)

THEN TAKE IT OFF, CHILDREN! TAKE IT ALL THE WAY OFF!!

And on that note, almost EVERYBODY starts stripping while they dance. Stella can't even believe this shit. Murmurs to Winston.

STELLA

I can't do this...

But BUDDY takes this as his cue to boogie on over and get in her face. As she watches, grossed out, he begins a parody of a STRIPTEASE for her, his former-football bulk hanging out all over. It is funny, and Stella does not know what to do, except she is getting more awkward by the moment as the big guy undoes the drawstring on his pj's. Delilah stands back, watching with interest to see how Stella will handle this...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And when Buddy's trousers hit the floor, revealing his lavender, ridiculously small bikini briefs, a voice comes from one side...

WINSTON

(softly)

Oh, man, you are so hot!

Buddy keeps grinning, gyrating, trying to ignore the gentle sarcasm...

WINSTON (cont'd)

Look at those pecs, look at that six-pack...

Winston WHISTLES appreciatively. Stella can't help but grin, relaxes.

WINSTON (cont'd)

Well, this is too much competition for me. Is it too much for you, Miss Payne...?

And he holds out his hand. She take it. Tells Buddy...

STELLA

My very thought. Buddy, you're too much.

They just walk OFF the floor together. Buddy stares, wounded...

BUDDY

Come back, baby, you ain't seen it all...

But they keep going. And D is watching. All right.

---

EXT. STELLA'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

D is POUNDING on the door furiously.

DELILAH

Open up! I know you're in there 'cause your little boyfriend is gulping down cheeseburgers with his posse. So open up!

Stella opens the door. She's in a different night gown.

STELLA

What do you want slut?

(CONTINUED)

DELILAH

Me? How about you? Trolling  
Kindercare for dates are we? They're  
gonna lock you up for that shit.

STELLA

He's almost 21.

DELILAH

Oh, then it's almost not a felony.  
What's his name?

STELLA

His name is Winston.

Delilah pushes past her and comes in, plops herself down  
on the bed and says...

DELILAH

You knew all along you were sneaking  
off to see that boy tonight.

STELLA

And Buddy Bear's poor heart is broken.  
Yeah, I'm scum.

Stella sits on the floor near the balcony door. Opens a  
bottle of 'Ting' and takes a sip. Turns Mary J. Blige's  
"My Life" down low on her little stereo.

DELILAH

Damn, he's fine.

STELLA

Who? Mr. Jailbait Hiphopper?

DELILAH

I was watching him dance for 2 hours.  
If he moves like that with his clothes  
on...

Delilah rolls over on her back, bats her eyes.

DELILAH (cont'd)

You two make an interesting pair.

STELLA

All I did was dance with him.

DELILAH

Yeah, all night long.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA  
Is that a problem?

DELILAH  
Must be. How come I'm in your bed  
instead of him?

STELLA  
I just unpacked!

Delilah nods.

DELILAH  
That. And you're chickenshit.

STELLA  
Don't be ridiculous. What would I do  
with a twenty year old kid?

DELILAH  
Fuck him. That's what.

STELLA  
Yeah. Right. I'm old enough to be his  
mother.

DELILAH  
Well, he wasn't acting like he wanted  
you to be his foster parent, that's  
all I can say. I won't tell if you  
don't.

STELLA  
Go to your room. You're getting on my  
nerves.

DELILAH  
I don't see why not. Hell, we're in  
Jamaica. Have a fling. I'm sure  
gonna give Jack something to remember  
me by and then some...

D settles back on the pillows, shifts gears.

STELLA  
Yeah yeah yeah. And blah blah blah,  
now get up and go to your own room.

Delilah gets even more comfortable, throws a blanket over  
her.

(CONTINUED)

27 Cont

1/8

28

1/8

29

6/8

DELILAH

You're gonna have to put me out. Now  
leave me alone.

Stella gets up and crawls into bed next to her.

EXT. RESORT BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Stella's on her belly, asleep on a chaise. The beach is almost empty. Nate, 60ish, a dirty old man, sits next to her, staring at her ass. He's in droopy trunks, big gut, scratching his head. The sun awakens Stella who gets up and runs straight into the ocean.

MOMENTS LATER

She returns to dry off and the old man is still lurking.

NATE

Feels good doesn't it.

STELLA

Yes it does.

She speeds up her task when she notices how hard he's looking at her. Wraps the towel around her waist, gathers up her Walkman, books, etc.

NATE

I'm surprised you ain't over to the  
nude beach. With all that.

Stella stops moving. No he didn't say that.

STELLA

Excuse me?

NATE

Why don't you come on over there with  
me?

Stop this old fart.

STELLA

Do you really think I'd be caught  
running around naked in front of a  
bunch of white folks and dirty old  
men? I don't think so. Now. I hope  
you have a splendid afternoon.

And she picks up her tote and heads toward the pool.

(CONTINUED)



29 cont 1/8

NATE

Wait! I didn't mean to offend you,  
baby. Let me buy you a drink!

Stella hears him following her, which is why she b-lines  
it toward the pool without turning around.

CUT TO:

SWIMMING POOL:

Stella is relieved and pleased to see Winston doing laps  
in the pool. She slides into the deep end and he almost  
swims into her. He stands so close his shoulder touches  
hers. Feeling him is a bit too much so she inches away.

30

STELLA

Winston. Do me a favor and talk to me  
and please don't look but that old man  
headed this way is trying to hit on  
me.

He peers over her shoulder, then back at her.

WINSTON

Who can blame him.

Wait a minute. Let me get this straight.

STELLA

If I weren't in my right mind I'd  
swear you're trying to hit on me too.

He smiles down at her, gently brushes her braids away  
from her face and with the utmost sincerity...

WINSTON

And you'd be right.

Stella let's her head plummet under the water because she  
can't handle it. And when she comes up...

STELLA

You are serious, aren't you?

He's looking at her most tenderly, wishing he could show  
her how he feels right now.

WINSTON

Very much so.

(CONTINUED)

Stella stares in his eyes. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

STELLA

So. Are you saying that you would like to sleep with me, Winston?

WINSTON

Are you paying attention?

Stella nods her head like a kid. But Winston simply moves closer to her, letting his fingers graze her waist and he looks into her eyes as if he loves her and Stella looks as though she could surrender, as if she's in a dream or something when she calmly says...

STELLA

Okay.

STELLA (V.O.)

Excuse me. What did I just say?

Winston's grinning big time and gives her a squeeze. Nate's pissed. Stella's forgotten all about him, until her nose brushes against Winston's neck. Can see her breathing in his scent.

WINSTON

You won't change your mind at the last minute will you?

STELLA

(bravely)

No. But I don't know what I'm doing and I can't believe what I just said to you. This has got to be illegal, you think?

Somewhat offended...

WINSTON

What would make you say something like that?

STELLA

(sighs)

Winston. I'm old enough to be your mo...

WINSTON

Why don't you just tell me how old we are about 3 million times right now,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

30  
Cont

WINSTON (cont'd)  
so that I never have to hear it for  
the rest of our lives.

She looks at him and blinks. Likes the fact that he likes her. He said more than he meant to...

WINSTON  
Or. The rest of the week.

She smiles.

STELLA  
What makes you think you're gonna last  
a week?

He smiles back.

WINSTON  
I'm just hoping.

Staring at each other.

STELLA  
What is that cologne you're wearing?

WINSTON  
Escape.

STELLA (V.O.)  
Easier said than done.

---

INT. STELLA'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

The door opens into darkness. Stella's in a halter dress. Kicks off sandals. Winston, in white linen slacks and black T-shirt, carries doggie-bag. They've eaten. And danced. Moonlight fills part of the room. Stella turns on the stereo, LIGHTS a few candles. Can see she's nervous, but Winston, looks pretty calm.

STELLA  
Have a seat, Winston.

But he doesn't. He walks over behind her, placing his large hands on her bare shoulder, bends down so his lips touch her ear. Why'd he go and do that? She's a goner now. She is so excited, she seems almost frightened. Amazed by how caught up she is in this kid.

WINSTON  
You are really beautiful, Stella.

(CONTINUED)

31  
Cont

Before she can even think about responding, he slowly spins her to face him and kisses her in slow motion. Stella's not sure how to take it. Wants to give herself permission to go ahead and enjoy him/this, but it's been a long time, and she's scared, which is why she steps back.

WINSTON (cont'd)  
What's wrong?

STELLA  
Who taught you how to do this?

WINSTON  
Do what?

STELLA  
Touch and kiss with such conviction.  
Like you know exactly what...

He is thrilled that he's doing it right. No one's ever told him. Kisses her again, deeper, and holds her closer. She sinks into him, he drops his arms around her and they caress each other until they are knitted together...

...Winston slowly unzips her dress and slides it down over her shoulders. Stella's in her strapless bra, lets him peel the dress until it drops to the floor. He's looking at her.

She's insecure about her body, his soft smile erases all doubts.

Stella begins to unbutton his shirt and we:

---

CUT TO:

32

BED:

They are so intertwined, it is obvious that they're trying to get closer than close in a sensual versus sexual manner. They are exploring and appreciating each other so eagerly that it becomes unbearable to control and...

WINSTON  
(whispers)  
Is it okay now?

(CONTINUED)

32  
cont

Stella kisses him on the cheek yes. We see their bodies become like the waves outside the window. Seal is singing something soft. But they don't hear it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - LATER

33

Winston and Stella are the only ones out here. They're sitting at the edge of the surf, side by side, shoulder's touching, pushing their toes through the sand. Stella's thinking out loud, as if she's talking to herself.

STELLA

...so what are you telling me? You don't really have a passion for medicine. There's nothing wrong with that.

WINSTON

That's just it. I do want to be a doctor. At least I always have. It's just when you're dad's a surgeon and you know what he's always expected...

His voice trails off.

STELLA

(softly)

...you don't really feel like you have a choice.

He looks over at her. Struck by how simply and directly she understands this. Nods, yeah.

WINSTON

I'm kind of caught in the middle. I don't want to have my life controlled by my father's expectations. But I don't want to throw it away rebelling against him either.

STELLA

So what do you really want?

He looks at her. Says nothing.

STELLA (cont'd)

Good question, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WINSTON

I told my father that I was turning down my place in med school, at least postponing it for a while. I thought he'd freak out, you know.

She pushes both heels into the sand.

STELLA

But he was pretty understanding, said take all the time you need because I know you'll do the right thing.

He nods slowly.

WINSTON

How'd you know?

STELLA

Because that's what my Mama said to me. She always figured I was the one who was going to get out of the projects, make something of myself, which pretty much came down to a lot of money. But I had other ideas. I wanted to make furniture.

He smiles, real slow.

WINSTON

Furniture.

STELLA

But in the end, I wound up just where she wanted me to. In the money markets.

WINSTON

Tell me about the furniture.

STELLA

You don't really want to hear about th...

WINSTON

When I say I want to hear about something. I really do.

She can see he means that.

(CONTINUED)

33  
Cont

STELLA

Well, I'd jump out of bed and run  
straight to the garage and -- shoot, I  
was about your age then -- and I'd sit  
there in my pajamas and play until...

She hasn't thought about this in ages.

WINSTON

Until what?

STELLA

Daylight.

Now she seems to have realized how long it's been.

STELLA (cont'd)

Sometimes you don't know how your life  
is going to turn out. Even when you  
plan it.

WINSTON

You can't plan everything, though.  
Right?

STELLA

You can try.

She squints as if the darkness is coming closer. He's  
listening, closely.

WINSTON

You don't make furniture anymore?

STELLA

Nope.

She is almost apologetic about it.

WINSTON

Why not?

STELLA (cont'd)

I make money instead.

He moves behind her and wraps his legs and arms around  
her. Holds her closer. Neither of them wants this moment  
to end. A long silence. They listen to the water.

34  
RAIN  
OUTSIDE

INT. HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

It is POURING down outside. Stella's getting dressed. Something floral, islandy. Cool Reggae music playing from radio. She looks somnambulant, glowing, and still the sense of impending excitement. As she puts on lipstick, there's a knock on the door. Who could that be?

STELLA

Yes?

WINSTON (O.S.)

Stella, its me. Winston.

Looks at her watch. He's early. She opens the door. He's drenched. She starts to smile, but can tell right away that something's wrong. She steps away so he can enter but he doesn't move.

STELLA

You're early. Come on in.

He ducks, sits carefully on the edge of the bed. Looks uncomfortable to say the least.

WINSTON

I just got hired at Windswept. I'm going to be an assistant to the head chef.

She smiles.

STELLA

Well great. That's what you came here for.

But he looks increasingly anxious.

WINSTON

I have to leave right now. I'm meeting with my boss in an hour.

Oh. She says nothing, trying to downplay her disappointment.

WINSTON (cont'd)

I'm really sorry. I thought I was going to spend all day and all night with you.

(CONTINUED)



34

STELLA

Well, what time do you get off tonight?

WINSTON

I have to work tonight and tomorrow. Two guys walked out on them. That's why I got hired. So I'm on call the rest of the week.

Stella tries to conjure up a grin, but it's damn near impossible. She wanted him to be excited about her.

STELLA

Look. It's been fun, Winston. And next time I'm in Jamaica and want to play high school games, I'll be sure to look you up first.

1

This stings. He stands there for a few seconds wondering what he can say to make her understand but he can't think of anything except...

WINSTON

I want to see you before you leave, Stella.

STELLA

Why?

WINSTON

Because I have to. I get two hours free time each evening.

STELLA (V.O.)

Wow. Two WHOLE hours?

STELLA

Don't strain yourself, Winston. Let's just say goodbye now.

WINSTON

No. Let me call you. I'm sure I can make it over here at least once before you leave. Please..

And before she can do anything like escape he walks over and kisses her on the lips, lightly. And he holds her like he loves her or something and Stella just stands there like a fool and he smiles deeply at her and walks out the door into all that rain. She is fucked up again.

35

EXT. WATERFALL - MORNING

Delilah and Stella are among a group walking across big BOULDERS of rushing water at the lip of a waterfall. Stella stops to take in the view, sits on a boulder. Delilah joins her, can read her thoughts.

DELILAH

You think you got played, don't you?

STELLA

Let's not go there. Isn't this beautiful?

DELILAH

We're going there. Look at that bottom lip. You're pouting, Stella. Haven't seen you like this in centuries.

STELLA

I'm not pouting. I'm pissed.

DELILAH

I'd say turnt out is closer to it.

She has to acquiesce. Sighs and shaking her head in disbelief.

STELLA

By a twenty year old kid.

DELILAH

Would you feel better if he was forty?

STELLA

At least I'd have some dignity! I wouldn't feel like some desperate old broad.

DELILAH

But was it good, Bertha?

Stella kicks the water just thinking about him/it.

STELLA

Better than that.

DELILAH

So return the man's phone calls.

7

(CONTINUED)

35

STELLA

No. It's done. It was only one night.  
Damn. But one damn good...

DELILAH

Return. The man's. Phone calls.

She stands up. Looks around.

DELILAH (cont'd)

God's here.

Looks back at her girlfriend.

DELILAH (cont'd)

You're not fooling anybody. Starting  
with me.

Saunters off.

---

INT. STELLA'S HOTEL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Her bags are packed and ready to go. She looks at the  
phone. Should I or shouldn't I? Oh go ahead. Picks up the  
receiver, dials.

STELLA

Yes, Winston Shakespeare please.

VOICE (O.S.) -

He's not here.

STELLA

Do you expect him back soon?

VOICE (O.S.)

Can't be sure. I can take a message if  
you like.

STELLA

No. That's okay. Thanks.

And she hangs up. Bellman there to get the bags. She's  
outta here. It was fun while it lasted.

---

EXT. STELLA'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Stella's in the back seat of a towncar that pulls into  
her driveway where an orange and white AMBULANCE is  
parked behind her black BMW. She does not seem a bit  
alarmed, until she spots Vanessa, and a very pregnant  
Angela (the Black Laura Ashley), dragging a folded lawn

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

chair through the side gate to greet her. Angela plops down, crosses her arms and legs as best she can, and obviously can't wait to share. Vanessa, however, is running up to Stella.

VANESSA

First of all. Welcome back, Slut.

ANGELA

(loudly)

I'd say that's a pretty accurate description.

Stella cuts her eyes at Vanessa: you've got a big mouth.

STELLA

Can I at least get into my own house without coming home to instant bullshit?

VANESSA

Next trip. I'm sorry Sis, but Miss FBI Agent here grilled me so long and hard that I had to tell.

STELLA

Whatever. Can you at least help me with my bags.

VANESSA

No. First let me tell you. I've got some good news and of course some bad news.

Stella stops dead in her tracks.

STELLA

It's not Quincy is it?

Vanessa's shaking her head no. Stella looks relieved.

ANGELA

If it ~~was~~ Quincy, you were on the other side of the world partying, so what could you have done if it was? And plus I've heard you're a cradle-robber anyway, so it's probably hard keeping the children straight.

VANESSA

You didn't have to go there, Angela, not at all.

(CONTINUED)

37  
Cont

4

37  
Cont

STELLA

It's okay. But then again...

VANESSA

...hey girl! I love those braids! You look like a real hoochie-mama. And Angela. Don't say another word.

STELLA

She'll be delivering in this driveway in a few minutes. So don't start with me.

She reaches inside the BMW and opens the garage door with the Genie. Angela's digging in her purse looking for her car keys. Vanessa knows she has to talk fast now...

4

VANESSA

Anyway, before you get too pissed, they're about to cut my cable off and snatch back my Nordstrom's card if I don't pay cause you know Chantel's Day Late Daddy is late again with the pizolla and can I borrow \$300 until whenever?

This is not a new request.

STELLA

Okay. So what's the good news?

VANESSA

Did I say there was some good news?

STELLA

Yeah.

VANESSA

I'm still beautiful.

Stella just stares at her.

STELLA

Vanessa, did you feed Phoenix and Chester or are they dead?

VANESSA

It's still Wild Kingdom around here. Now. The other bad news is I had a little baby accident in your car BUT IT WASN'T MY FAULT! I SWEAR.

(CONTINUED)

Stella pulls her suitcase around to the front of the BMW and sees a small dent and scratch.

STELLA

Did anyone get hurt?

VANESSA

Nope. Why come you not acting pissed?

STELLA

It's just a stupid car. It can be fixed.

Vanessa is like totally baffled by Stella's reaction. But then, starts an 'oh I get it' laugh...

VANESSA

That young boy musta put something on your ass. Look at me...

And she walks over to Stella and lifts her chin up. Stella tries but fails to resist.

VANESSA (cont'd)

What has happened to you?

STELLA

Nothing.

VANESSA

Did you go down there and fall in love with a 20-year old boy, Stella?

STELLA

Are you crazy?

ANGELA

How could you stoop so low?

VANESSA

Yeah, and I wanna know how low did you go? Seriously. You look different. What's up with this?

Angela gets up out of the chair since no one's paying her any attention anyway.

ANGELA

All I want to say is thank God it was just a little fling and you're not seeing him again but you should be ashamed of yourself for being so

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

37  
Cont

37

ANGELA (cont'd)  
desperate and I just hope you used a  
condom because those people have a  
history of AIDs...

VANESSA  
That's Haiti, Miss Manners.

STELLA  
Oh please take your pregnant-ass home,  
Angela. Right now! You know how to  
spoil a wet dream. And for your  
information. I am not completely  
stupid. And I haven't committed any  
crime. All I did was sleep with him.  
Damn.

4/8

Angela rises with difficulty, starts folding her chair...

VANESSA  
Yeah, and I wanna hear all the juicy  
details. Blow by blow. But I've gotta  
get to work so call me in the car.

Vanessa gets in the ambulance, kicks over the engine,  
turns the music up to blasting, puts on the SIREN, and  
PEELS out, which leaves her sisters standing in the  
driveway shaking their head: she's pitiful.

INT. ISAAC'S OFFICE -DAY

38

Stella BURSTS into Isaac's office without knocking. She  
looks as if she could kill.

STELLA  
What is going on around here, Isaac?  
Are we moving and no one bothered to  
tell me? I'm at a loss here. I mean  
there are active files missing from my  
desk, and I didn't authorize access to  
anyone. Hell, I can't even sign onto  
my computer. Has the system crashed?  
Talk to me talk to me...

4/8

ISAAC  
Sit down, Stella.

She's not stupid. Something's wrong. Way wrong. She's  
out of the loop. Shit.

STELLA  
I don't feel like sitting down. Just  
tell me what's going on.

(CONTINUED)

ISAAC

Look, our numbers are down, as you know. We've had three rough quar...

STELLA

It'll turn around, Isaac, it always does.

He stares at her.

ISAAC

Well, Weinberg's impatient. He's cutting back, and to avoid playing favorites...

She blinks. She's got it.

ISAAC (cont'd)

...it's last hired, first gone. So. You're out, Stell. And I'm sorry.

Stella is stunned. Frozen at first, but then get's an 'it figures' look on her face. Playing dirty again. Without saying a word she turns and walks out and closes the door softly behind her. But can't let them off this easy, so she walks back in...

ISAAC

I know they plan to offer an excellent package.

STELLA

And you think I'm gonna accept that? I built this division. I made millions for this company. You think I'd take some golden parachute and drop back in my hole?! You've known me too long Isaac! You tell those bastards it better be platinum, and even then, I might sue their sorry asses!

ISAAC

I understand how you feel. I didn't want this to happen, but could not stop it. I made my stand.

STELLA

No you didn't.

(quieter)

Otherwise, you'd be out here with me.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

Isaac admits her truth with his eyes. It's shitty to fire old friends, or be fired by one. She looks around at his office.

STELLA

Watch your back, pal. Once Weinberg has his knife out, he'll be looking for new places to stick it.

---

INT. STELLA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Quincy's making grits, turkey sausage and pancakes for his Mom. A little overwhelmed but he's on a mission. Stella watches as he slices bananas and strawberries between stirring and flipping.

QUINCY

So, Mom, now that you don't have a job does that mean we can go on welfare?

STELLA

No it does not. We're not going to be destitute, Quincy.

He's stirring those grits which are stuck to the bottom.

QUINCY

Well, don't forget I've got over \$3,000 in my savings if we need it.

STELLA

Thank you, baby, but I've put some pocket money into a few funds that should tide us over for a little while...

The pancakes are smoking and she wants to turn them over but has agreed to let him do this for her.

QUINCY

But don't you feel bad about getting fired, Mom? I'd be pissed.

STELLA

You'd be what?

QUINCY

Sorry. But I'd for sure be mad as hell.

Stella does not feel like correcting him again, as he sets a plate in front of her.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA

It's okay. Things happen for a reason. My time was up there. And I can do better.

Quincy starts digging out grits to put on her plate, makes room for dark pancakes, hot syrup from microwave and sausage. It's edible. He's proud. So is Stella. He sits in front of her. He has no plate. This is for his Mom.

QUINCY

I hope this makes you feel better.

Looks him in the eyes. Loves this boy.

STELLA

You always make me feel better.

And she picks up her fork, surprised and pleased that it's good.

QUINCY

So, Mom, did you have fun in Jamaica or what?

An instant smile emerges.

STELLA

I did indeed.

She picks up a small bag and dumps out postcards, which Quincy flips through and stops at the cliffdivers.

QUINCY

Whoaa. Mom. You did THIS?

Stella's shaking her head no while she eats. Quincy has a brainstorm.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Mom. Since you don't have a job now do you think it would be possible for us to take our family bonding vacation in Jamaica this summer instead of Africa which I can easily visit On-Line until we can afford it and please don't say we have to go to that stupid Martha's Vineyard which is only like in Boston...

(CONTINUED)

39

STELLA

Quincy. Listen to me. We may not be broke but we have to be sensible. I have to start looking for a job, dealing with lawyers and... I've got too much on my plate right now...maybe over Christmas break if all goes well.

4/8

He's disappointed but he does understand.

QUINCY

Can I sleep over Jeremy's?

STELLA

You just got home and I haven't seen you in two weeks!

QUINCY

But Mom, I live here. You can have me all to yourself tomorrow. Please?

Oh why not. And she pops him upside the head. He kisses her again and again and again, and he's gone.

---

INT. STELLA'S FAMILY ROOM - SAME NIGHT

Leroy's pouring Stella a glass of Merlot. He's already had a few, but he's not drunk, still putzing around. Stella's sitting on the other side of the bar.

40

LEROY

You should pass.

STELLA

I already did.

LEROY

Don't accept anything until this is over.

4/8

STELLA

Might not accept anything at all. I'm tired of securities.

LEROY

But this is what you do for a living. This is what people respect you for. You've got a mortgage, and a kid to feed and educate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STELLA

Leroy, that's what people pay me for,  
but I hope they respect me for a lot  
more than simply making their money  
grow.

He continues his journey around the bar and it's clear  
from his expression that he's switching into his Love  
Mood. When he gets to her, he starts kissing her neck and  
at first we can see that Stella's mind is somewhere else,  
and when old Leroy turns her face to his so he can give  
her real kiss, Stella turns away.

STELLA (cont'd)

I thought we had this conversation.

LEROY

About what?

STELLA

About what you're doing right now.

LEROY

I was just hoping you were feeling  
vulnerable.

STELLA

Shut up, Leroy. Take your hands off me  
and let me buy you dinner.

(beat)

With my last dime.

In spite of himself. Kisses her on the forehead, takes  
her by the hand. Still friends.

---

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Quincy's cleaned the garage and is now hosing it out.  
EVERYTHING'S in the driveway. Stella's doing her  
stretches, about to jog. Starts the heartrate monitor and  
as it begins to BEEP, the wall phone RINGS and Quincy  
answers on the first ring.

QUINCY

Hello. Sure. Who? Winston? One moment,  
please. Mom, it's some guy named  
Winston and he's got an accent.

Stella straightens up, takes the phone. Monitor BEEPING  
up STORM now. Quincy now has cleanser: BUBBLES galore.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA

Winston? What a nice surprise! How'd you get my number?

INTERCUT THROUGHOUT:

Phone call of Winston in the resort kitchen. He's alone, sitting on a stool in the middle of an industrial kitchen. It's surprisingly quiet in here with the exception of a soft metal echo. Throughout the conversation, he swivels slowly around and around on that stool...

WINSTON

Your friend Delilah gave it to me when I came to look for you. I wanted to say goodbye.

STELLA

She gave my number to you? She doesn't even know you. How much did you pay her?

WINSTON

Everything I had. Plus an I.O.U.

STELLA

I tried calling. But you weren't there. Anyway. I've been thinking about you.

WINSTON

Really? No you haven't. What's that noise?

She's fumbling to turn off the monitor.

STELLA

What noise?

WINSTON

I miss you Stella.

She is surprised to hear him say it, but it's also music to her ears.

STELLA

No you don't. Can you hold for a second, Winston?

Stella puts him on hold and does her own version of a touch-down SHUFFLE.

(CONTINUED)

42  
cont

QUINCY

Mom, did you just score?

STELLA

Hold that thought.

She gets back on the phone, turns away from Quincy who's now busy hosing.

STELLA (cont'd)

I'm back. When we left off you were just getting into how much you miss me.

WINSTON

I wrote you a letter but I was afraid to send it.

STELLA

Fax it to me.

WINSTON

I want to see you.

A beat.

STELLA

Why don't you come to the point.

He laughs. She likes the sound of it.

STELLA

(flirtatious)

Look, I really don't see how it's possible, Winston.

WINSTON

In 3 months I can take a sick leave.

STELLA (V.O.)

Three months? A woman could shrivel up in two.

STELLA

Well, maybe I can arrange something. I did promise Quincy I'd take him to Jamaica...

...and she can't even believe these words have just rolled off her tongue! But she's glad she said it. Quincy heard this, turns his back to his mom, lifts his

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

knee up and brings his elbow down to hit and WHISPERS a loud...

QUINCY

Yes! How soon how soon?

WINSTON

How soon?

STELLA

I'll think this over, and call you back with the details.

WINSTON

Would you do me a favor when you come?  
Could you bring me some junk food?

STELLA

Junk food.

WINSTON

Oreos, Snickers, HiHos and Froot  
Loops.

STELLA

And what are you going to do for me?

WINSTON

I'll think of something.

Suddenly Quincy's standing in her face.

STELLA

You do that. I'll call you tonight.

WINSTON

I can't wait.

Hangs up.

QUINCY

So, Mom, who's Winston?

STELLA

A guy I met in Jamaica.

QUINCY

Well it's about time!

STELLA

He's not my boyfriend, Quincy.

(CONTINUED)

42  
Cont

QUINCY

Whatever. So we're going to see him in Jamaica, of course, right?

STELLA

Yes.

QUINCY

Cool. Can Chantel come with us? She's never been to Jamaica, I'm sure of it.

STELLA

I don't care. But Quincy, there's a little problem. Winston's a tad younger than I am.

QUINCY

How much younger?

STELLA

He's not quite thirty.

QUINCY

So he's twenty-nine.

STELLA

Younger.

QUINCY

How much younger is younger?

STELLA

A few years.

QUINCY

How much is a few years?

Silence.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Mom, he is older than me.

STELLA

He's twenty.

QUINCY

(really impressed)

Cool! Who am I allowed to tell?

STELLA

Practically nobody.

(CONTINUED)



He nods enthusiastically. Deal.

EXT. OAKLAND HOUSE - DAY

Stella's hair is now in a ponytail as she pulls up to a small house where she sees a number of young ladies sitting out on the porch, two are twins, each with a baby on their lap. They are watching cars go by, looking for a familiar face. Hip hop music BLASTING from the ghetto blaster sitting on the ledge. As Stella walks up the front steps, a young woman with at least a thousand platinum braids cascading down her back gives Stella the once over.

STELLA

Goldie?

The girl points to inside the house. Stella enters.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE HOUSE:

Talk about Ikea and Levitz! EVERYTHING in this place is black or white and crushed velvet and pleather plastic or formica but it is spotless. Stella walks into the kitchen where GOLDIE, 30, whose hair is straw-gold thick Shirley Temple ringlets, is dressed for a disco, smoking a cigarette and using the flame from her BIC lighter to burn the ends off a pregnant woman's last sixty braids. Two more women are sitting at the kitchen table, one taking the other's braids out, but both watching what is apparently a tape of an entire week of THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS.

GOLDIE

Stella, I know Vanessa told you that sometime we run a little behind. So have a seat, baby. You want a Pepsi or a Corona? Get one of them Jets or Ebony's over there. Restless is on if you wanna watch it.

Stella takes a JET that's handed to her. It is three years old.

STELLA

Thanks. But I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

GOLDIE

You said you wanted individuals cause the last style you had fell out too fast. Did you bring your own hair?

STELLA

No. Vanessa said you'd have some here.

GOLDIE

You want human or synthetic?

STELLA

Human.

Goldie walks over to the wall where a cardboard cut-out of a woman's head is glued and from it hangs about eight different thicknesses and lengths of braids.

GOLDIE

Pick one. You look like a 4. Senitha, we ain't got but one package of number 4 in the back, huh?

SENITHA

(looking at Stella's hair)  
Yeah. But if we put 4 around the edges and mix 2 and 6 for inside, ain't nobody gon' know the difference.

Stella pulls on a braid, then sits down and begins watching the video like everyone else.

STELLA

How long do you think it'll take.

GOLDIE

If Senitha help me out especially if she want hers done tomorrow for free: about nine hours. Go a little thicker and we can do it in seven.

SENITHA

You wanna be outta here before it get dark, honey, but my husband'll walk you to your car if we ain't finished.

STELLA

That's reassuring. But I like the first one.

(CONTINUED)

44  
CONT

GOLDIE

So girl tell us all about this 20 year  
old you met in Jamaica!

Stella's totally outdone, somewhat uncomfortable.

STELLA

Vanessa's got a big mouth.

GOLDIE

No she don't, but we wanna give you a  
style that'll roll back the clock a  
few years.

SENITHA

Yeah, girl. Do Jamaicans do it  
different?

GOLDIE

You ever seen the way Boombastic  
dance? I heard all them Jamaicans move  
like that, girl. Is it true?

SENITHA

Yeah, should we be on the next plane?

Stella does not know what to say.

SENITHA

Look. We ain't got nothing but time to  
listen and we'll be barbequing out  
back in a little while. Only \$3 for  
ribs, \$2 for chicken. Bread come with  
it. Mary be bringing her dry-ass  
pound cake around in a minute. They a  
dollar a slice.

STELLA

Thanks.

And Stella settles in, the woman with the white braids  
comes in and dumps three shopping bags on the floor.

PLATINUM

I got Calvin Armani and Gucci. If I  
ain't got your size. I can get it.

Stella shakes her head no but thanks anyway. Until she  
spots a pair of sunglasses she likes.

I

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

Stella, Quincy and CHANTEL, 11, a developing chocolate Fox, are in coach. Chantel drops her SASSY magazine and is flirting with two BLACK BOYS about the same age, who are sitting across the aisle.

STELLA  
Eyes front, Chantel.

CHANTEL  
What, Auntie Stell? I didn't do anything.

STELLA  
I promised your Mom I'd keep my eye on you. You're getting too grown. And you're one step away from the Convent.

She looks confused. Whispers in Quincy's ear...

CHANTEL  
Q-zart. What's a convent?

Closes his GamePro Video Game magazine, shakes his head like: You are so stupid, Chantel.

QUINCY  
It's where all different kinds of companies go to have a meeting and sell stuff in bulk, sorta like Home Depot.

CHANTEL  
Oh.

She accepts this answer then makes sure Auntie's not watching and with those big eyes, to the boys across the aisle, she says 'hey'.

EXT. JAMAICAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Winston's zooming on his moped through an amazing backdrop of the BLUE MOUNTAINS.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRANGIPANI HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Winston walks up to the registration desk where a clerk, a somewhat attractive GIRL (MS. THANG), 19, is standing, bored but with an attitude. What's weird is that she's

(CONTINUED)

only wearing LIPSTICK on the bottom lip, and a fake ponytail a different color from her real hair. You can't tell her she's not fine. She's ogling Winston, who basically ignores her when he turns his attention toward the pool and HEARS children SQUEALING and he heads on out...

CUT TO:

POOL AREA:

A group of kids are playing Marco Polo. Winston can see, sense, which one belongs to Stella, and squats to address Quincy ...

WINSTON

Where's your Mom?

STELLA (O.S.)

I'm right here, Mon.

Stella arrives beside him gracefully, easily. They just seem to fit, these two. She looks nervous, in that excited way she gets when she's around him.

QUINCY

You must be Winston.

WINSTON

How you doing there, Quincy. And you must be Chanel.

CHANTEL

(with a half wave)

It's Chantel. Hi.

Winston gives Stella a warm hug while the kids watch. He can feel her excitement, see it in her eyes. And he loves it.

WINSTON

Soooo... welcome back to Jamaica,  
Stella Payne.

She cocks her head and simply smiles at him. The sexual tension is palpable. Chantel's not missing a thing.

CHANTEL

(to Quincy)

Who is that guy?

(CONTINUED)

QUINCY

He's probably my Mom's new boyfriend  
she had to come all this way to find  
because she couldn't find one in  
America but he's also very young.

CHANTEL

How young is he?

QUINCY

Not quite thirty.

Cuts his mom a conspiratorial look. Your secret's safe  
with me.

CHANTEL

Oh. That's not so young. He sure is  
cute.

QUINCY

Well, as you can see, he's already  
taken. MARCO!

CUT TO:

INT. POOL BAR - NIGHT

Kids are eating at a nearby table. Stella and Winston  
sit quietly at the poolside bar. He's putting his arms  
over her shoulders when Ms. Thang sits next to them and  
looks directly into Winston's eyes.

MS. THANG

Your son favors you a lot.

STELLA

He really takes after his father.  
He's changed so much since I last saw  
him.

Winston looks as if he wants to laugh, but goes along  
with this game.

MS. THANG

How long has it been?

STELLA

Almost a year. His dad and I've been  
divorced for 4 years now.

Ms. Thang is buying this.

(CONTINUED)

MS. THANG

Sad, but a lot of that going around.  
Well you sure look happy to see your  
Mum.

WINSTON

Let me show you how happy I am.

And he pulls Stella close to his chest, leans over and  
gives her a long deep kiss. Ms. Thang looks like someone  
just flashed a camera in her eyes, jumps off the bar  
stool and storms off.

WINSTON (cont'd)

(lazy smile)

What's her problem?

---

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Quincy and Chantel sprawled on their twin beds, sleeping  
soundly. So zonked, they didn't even take off their  
swimsuits.

---

INT. STELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stella and Winston are making love slowly, almost  
carefully; their souls unite and it is liberating for  
them both -- they surrender and then the combustion...

---

TIME CUT TO:

AFTERWARDS:

...still wrapped in each other's arms.

WINSTON

So Stella, where is this going?

She tries to sit up but he won't let her. She's grateful.

STELLA

To be honest. I don't know what I'm  
doing. All I know is that I like you  
more than I should.

WINSTON

What are you afraid of?

Her body stiffens.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA

I'm not afraid. But let's be real.  
How much sense do we make?

WINSTON

Someone your age should know that  
anything that's good hardly ever makes  
sense.

Stella pushes him playfully.

STELLA

Hush. You are not only rocking my  
world but you're smarter than me too.

They laugh. Then quiet. A kiss. He has something to  
confess. She can tell.

STELLA (cont'd)

What?

WINSTON

I quit my job.

STELLA

You look like you're apologizing for  
it.

WINSTON

I don't want you to think I'm  
frivolous.

STELLA

Tell you what, I quit my job too.

Stunned.

STELLA (cont'd)

Right after they fired my behind.

WINSTON

Wow. Are you okay?

STELLA

Well, I've got the best lawyers in San  
Francisco representing me. I'll come  
out okay.

WINSTON

I wasn't talking about money. If my  
father couldn't practice medicine, it  
would be like someone took his

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



WINSTON (cont'd)  
identity away. He wouldn't know who he  
was anymore.

He looks in her eyes.

WINSTON (cont'd)  
So you can't tell me this isn't a big  
deal. It is.

STELLA  
Well, I can't exactly fall apart  
worrying, now can I?

He presses her face against his chest and begins to  
stroke her head continuously.

WINSTON  
Yes you can. I'll do your worrying for  
you tonight. So hush.

He's so sweet, yet so very naive, but nevertheless, she's  
crazy about him anyway.

STELLA  
Okay. You worry about my job. I'll  
worry about yours.

Sinks her head into his chest, but her face asks: What  
am I doing?

---

EXT. VILLA - DAY

Stella's sitting on the front porch reading and watching  
Winston play water games with the kids in the ocean. He  
is one of the kids and she sees this. Phone rings on the  
floor by the door. She bends down, pulls the chord  
outside.

INTERCUT:

---

INT. WHITE ROOM - DAY

We see a CLOSEUP of Delilah's face. She doesn't look as  
healthy or as vibrant as she did in Jamaica.

DELILAH  
So you letting that boy up for air or  
what? Winston, can you hear me baby?

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

51  
cont

52

53

54

STELLA

(laughs)

Shut up. He's on a banana boat with the kids. And what took you so damn long to return my calls, Bertha? I could be dying and you wouldn't know it. How you doing, D?

CONTINUE INTERCUTTING THROUGHOUT...

WIDE SHOT:

We now see that Delilah's in a HOSPITAL BED, hooked up to all kinds of monitors, IV's, etc. She pulls on the plastic chord to get more comfortable.

DELILAH

I've had better days. But let's not waste a perfectly expensive phone call talking about me. For somebody who just got fired, you sound pretty damn chipper. I love it!

Stella looks out to see Winston screaming and having a great time with the kids.

STELLA

I'm losing my fucking mind is what I'm doing.

DELILAH

We always knew that, but at least now you've got a good reason.

STELLA

How can you say that? I'm out of a job, I'm spending money I don't have and I'm sleeping with a 20-year old.

DELILAH

And your point...

STELLA

I don't have a clue anymore about who I am or what I'm doing.

DELILAH

Who you are?

STELLA

(quietly)

Yeah maybe.

55  
INTER  
CUT

(CONTINUED)

54/55

D looks around the hospital room. She's uncomfortable but trying to play it off. Drugs from the IV are starting to drip and her speech begins to slow down a little.

DELILAH

Let me tell you something, baby. Life is too short to be bullshitting yourself. What is the problem with you liking him?

STELLA

He doesn't get it, D. He's a kid. He hasn't been anywhere done anything, he can't even buy me a drink and he doesn't know the first thing abo... hell, he hasn't even had his heart broken. And this morning I found Froot Loops in the bed!

D starts laughing, but has to stop when a nurse comes in to check her vital signs.

DELILAH

Yum yum yum. What did you do with those? Not only is he young but creative...

STELLA

D, come on. I'm messed up.

DELILAH

You're just scared. But do me and yourself a favor: get over it! Don't get stuck on stupid and blow this.

This takes up most of her energy.

DELILAH (cont'd)

Can we cut to the chase here cause I've got some folks waiting?

STELLA

Who?

DELILAH

None of your business.

The kids pull Winston up from the sand and when he stands facing Stella she squints to look at him hard. He blows her a kiss. Shit shit shit. Why'd he have to do that.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA

Why do you sound so tired all of a sudden?

DELILAH

Because I'm tired of listening to your bullshit. I love you, girl. And give my Godson a sloppy kiss for me.

She hangs up the phone, stares up at those monitors, then turns her head away and closes her eyes.

Stella hangs up and heads toward the beach.

---

EXT. RICK'S CAFE - DAY

Hundreds of tourists looking up at Jamaican cliff divers as well as down at other tourists preparing to jump from a 30-foot boulder into the blue water. Stella, Winston and the kids are in line waiting their turn.

STELLA

I'm not sure if I can do this.

QUINCY

Oh Mom, don't be such a wuss.

WINSTON

Yeah, Stella. What's a wuss?

CHANTEL

A scardy-cat.

WINSTON

Give me your hand and I'll jump with you.

She slaps his hand, giving him 'five'. When it's their turn Quincy jumps out far fast and high. Chantel quickly follows. Winston holds his arm out motioning Stella to go first. She kisses him on the lips, smiles at him from somewhere deep and LEAPS off the edge of that cliff with confidence and courage and chutzpah. She spreads her arms so wide they look like wings and once airborne, she soars. Gleams. Screams. Spins. Laughs. What took me so long?

---

INT. CAR - DAY

Winston's driving Stella and the kids through a lush RAINFOREST and after leaving they turn into a long drive where a beautiful home is perched at the top. They get

(CONTINUED)

57  
Cont

out of the car. She's knocked out by the place. Winston is proud.

STELLA

Wow. This is beautiful. But it doesn't look like a restaurant to me.

WINSTON

It's not. This is my folks place.

Stella swells up.

STELLA

And just what are we doing here?

WINSTON

Having lunch.

STELLA

Why didn't you tell me?

WINSTON

I wanted to surprise you.

STELLA

Well that you did. I don't like these kind of surprises. Look at me.

She's in a short sun-dress, slight cleavage. The kids have run off to check out the place.

WINSTON

You look beautiful.

STELLA

Your Mama's gonna think I'm a hooker!

He can't understand why she's so upset, but can't ask now because here comes Mom and Dad. Mom's a fox, Stella's age, but wearing a conservative grey suit. Dad's a big guy and dressed in dockers and polo shirt. Stella generates a fake smile.

WINSTON

Mom and Dad, I want you to meet Stella.

Mom is looking her up and down. So is dad, but for different reasons. He's smiling in approval. Good taste son.

DAD

Very nice to meet you Stella.

(CONTINUED)

57  
Cont

MOM

Hungry?

STELLA

A little.

MOM

And are those your teenagers?

STELLA

No. I mean yes. My son's only 11, and  
so is my niece.

WINSTON

I'll go get them.

Stella gets the sarcasm but tries to play it off, as she  
and Winston follow the parents into the house.

CUT TO:

KITCHEN:

58

Mom's looking at the food being brought into the dining  
room, and Stella sticks her head in the door.

STELLA

Can I help?

MOM

No. The helpers can handle it. On  
second thought, come in. Sit.

Mom points to a stool near the counter. Stella sits.

STELLA

Okay.

MOM

I could beat around the bush, but it's  
not my style. So. How old are you  
Stella?

Stella feels trapped. Wasn't quite expecting this kind  
of welcome or reaction or confrontation. Be cool.

STELLA

I'm 40.

(CONTINUED)

58  
Cont

MOM

I'm 41. So tell me. Are you American women so desperate these days that you can't find a man your own age?

STELLA

No.

MOM

Well then. What could you possibly want with my baby?

STELLA

He's not a baby.

MOM

He's my baby. And you should be ashamed of yourself.

She walks toward the dining room door. Turns back.

MOM

Ashamed of yourself.

And gone. Leaving Stella alone.

CUT TO:

59

DINING ROOM TABLE:

Kids are back. Everybody's at the table. Winston senses something in the air.

DAD

Winston tells us you're a securities analyst.

Looks over at Winston. Dry.

STELLA

From time to time.

DAD

Maybe I could impose upon you to take a look through our portfolio.

MOM

Mervin, the woman is on vacation.

(CONTINUED)

Said in the tone of over-my-dead-fucking body.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD/ORCHARD - AFTERNOON

Stella's watching the kids run around the grounds. Her arms are crossed tightly. Winston's next to her.

60  
Cont.

STELLA

I have never been so humiliated in my life.

WINSTON

Stop overreacting. I know my mom can be diffic...

STELLA

She called me desperate.

Turns, glares at him.

STELLA (cont'd)

She said I should be ashamed of myself.

WINSTON

Sometimes she says things she doesn't m...

STELLA

She said it twice.

He hears that. Maybe this was rougher than he thought. He's sorry.

WINSTON

Look. I apologize. That was out of line. I just wanted you to meet my family.

STELLA

What would make you think I'm ready to meet your parents, Winston?

WINSTON

Because I wanted them to know how important you are to me.

STELLA

You could've asked me how I felt about it. Did that occur to you?

(CONTINUED)



WINSTON

I thought you'd be proud to meet them.

STELLA

It's not about your parents, it's about the immature way you did it.

WINSTON

Oh, so now you want to scold me like a child.

STELLA

Well, you're behaving like one, wouldn't you say?

WINSTON

You didn't think or act like I was such a kid last night, did you?

STELLA

Oh stop it! This whole scene is getting on my nerves.

WINSTON

No problem. Come on. I'll take you back to the hotel. I think we're finished here.

And he turns to head toward the car. Stella motions to the kids. No sign of the parents.

---

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Stella picks up a PIN MESSAGE slip from under the door, and as she unfolds it to read, the kids run out and head straight for the beach. Winston follows them, but he's somewhat somber and finds a cool spot under a palm tree. Stella looks both alarmed and fearful as she dials the number.

STELLA

Yes, a Dr. Steinberg, please.

She's put on hold. Looks out at the kids. Winston looks like an oil painting under that tree.

DR. STEINBERG (O.S.)

This is Dr. Steinberg.

(CONTINUED)

60  
Cont

61

61  
cont

STELLA

Yes, this is Stella Payne. I'm returning your call, although I'm not sure why you called me.

DR. STEINBERG (O.S.)

Your friend Delilah Jackson had your name down as next of kin.

STELLA

What do you mean by next of kin? Next of kin for what?

DR. STEINBERG (O.S.)

Well, whenever there's a problem we have to notify the next of kin.

STELLA

What kind of problem are you talking about?

DR. STEINBERG

I'm sorry to have to tell you, but Ms. Jackson is facing a medical emergency.

Silence. Stella is frozen. Still. Maybe she didn't hear him correctly. Softly...

STELLA

A what?

DR. STEINBERG (O.S.)

We did exploratory surgery this morning and found that her liver cancer is quite advanced.

STELLA

Her liver...?

DR. STEINBERG

She's been in the hospital for the past two weeks, and I thought you were aware. She told me she talked to you.

Stella now realizing the circumstances of her last phone call.

DR. STEINBERG (O.S.)

I think if you're able to get here. You should come now.

(CONTINUED)

She has to sit down now. No. This has to be a nightmare, but Winston and the kids wouldn't be in it, would they?

STELLA

(whispers)

Of course. As soon as possible.

Outside the azure waves are now rolling in SLOW MOTION, as are the kids running on the beach, and Winston, who is heading her way. When he reaches the SCREEN DOOR he can see something is wrong. In a somnambulant manner she walks up to it and in a cracked voice...

STELLA (cont'd)

Something's happened.

---

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY NIGHT ACCORDING TO KEVIN

Chantel and Quincy are sound asleep. Stella is leaning against the dark window, looking out. She's been doing this for a while, and finally, out of pure exhaustion, leans her head back and closes her eyes.

---

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE on Stella's face.

STELLA

...I'm waiting.

DELILAH (O.S.)

Okay okay. Two years ago.

REVERSE ANGLE to see Delilah in her hospital bed. She looks frightening. Stella doesn't seem to notice. So neither does D.

STELLA

So, it's settled. You haven't been really shopping for two whole years. Bergdorf's it is.

DELILAH

What's my limit, Bertha?

STELLA

Just keep in mind that I'm jobless.  
Five thousand.

Stella maneuvers herself at the foot of the bed, props D's feet in her lap. D Smiles.

(CONTINUED)

63  
Cont

DELILAH

You're nuts.

STELLA

Yeah, and you need a pedicure.

Reaches for that hospital lotion. Begins massaging D's feet.

STELLA (cont'd)

My balance at Bergdorf's is zero.

DELILAH

Then it's a deal.

STELLA

Your plants looked rough and when was the last time you vacuumed?

DELILAH

Did you water Big Bill like I asked you to, with a little fertilzer. He likes it like that.

STELLA

I did. But those two in the corner and the one in the bathroom...

DELILAH

I've never been crazy about those two. Somebody gave 'em to me.

STELLA

I straightened up the place. It looked like a bomb went off in the city dump?

DELILAH

Look. I fired my housekeeper. She was eating all my leftovers, and when I'd go to get something, it wouldn't be but a drop in there...

Stella picks up the remote. She's grinning.

DELILAH (cont'd)

What's so funny. What video is that?

STELLA

You know which one it is.

D tries to cover her face with her hands but the IV and her lack of strength won't let her.

(CONTINUED)

DELILAH  
You didn't.

STELLA  
I did.

DELILAH  
I won't be able to stand it.

STELLA  
Yes you will. Check this out hoochie-  
mama. Let's go to the video tape.

---

She presses play while still massaging D's feet. On the TV Monitor we see a LONG DOUBLE LINE of DANCING folks, almost all with AFRO's and OUTFITS from the early 80's, and they're GETTING DOWN to KOOL and the GANG and then down the middle, doing some unrecognizable DANCE comes a CHICK who thinks she's fine.

---

DELILAH  
What was her name? Cascade or something?

STELLA  
Cassandra.

DELILAH  
She was a 360 whore.

STELLA  
She was.

DELILAH  
And she couldn't dance. So you know how stiff she musta been in bed.

---

Cassandra dances on.

DELILAH (cont'd)  
Was her Mama holding the camera or what? Get out the way Cashmere!

Here comes an Eddie Murphy-looking guy.

---

DELILAH  
Who's that?

STELLA  
Looks like one of your old conquests to me.

(CONTINUED)

Delilah reaches for her glasses.

DELILAH

Oh shit. That was...

STELLA

James.

DELILAH

Wait a minute. I didn't sleep with him, did I?

Stella's nodding yes. And now here comes D in tight bellbottoms and a leotard, hair everywhere and she's sasshaying faster than the the EARTH WIND & FIRE song that's playing but getting all the way down.

DELILAH (cont'd)

That is not me. That is someone doing a bad imitation of me.

STELLA

That's you Bertha. But check out the broad behind you.

Sure enough it's Stella, looking stupider than Delilah and making another bad fashion statement. She looks like she's doing acrobatics or kung fu instead of dancing and even breaks all the way out and gets down to the floor. D has a smirk on her face.

DELILAH

You look like a fool.

Stella's covering her mouth with her hand from shock.

STELLA

I certainly do. But look at you. What was that mess you called yourself doing?

DELILAH

I don't know but we both look like we're having convulsions.

As they continue watching themselves they are LAUGHING so hard and Stella is squeezing D's feet so firmly that they do not see themselves get so close to the video camera that they leave the frame. We leave them on the bed like this.

INT. MANHATTAN CHURCH - AFTERNOON

64

The church is crowded. At least 100 people, of diverse ethnicities. Stella sits in front. Beige suit. Funky purple hat. She's staring at the casket. Is my best friend really in there?

MINISTER

And now we'll hear a few closing remarks from Delilah's good friend, Ms. Stella Payne.

1/8

When Stella hears her name she snaps out of this trance, looks up at the Minister, then back at the congregation. They are a blur until she gets up.

CUT TO:

INT. PULPIT:

65

She has no notes. Can't quite remember how she got up here. When she opens her mouth at first, no words come out. Okay. Get it together. Takes another tissue from her suit pocket. Looks out at all the unfamiliar faces. No one can help her. And that's when she sees...

...a tall FIGURE appears in the back of the church, standing inside that doorway until their eyes meet and WINSTON simply nods his head, 'Yes, I'm here'. Her eyes say 'thank you', as Stella blows out all that excess air in her chest, and looks down at the casket. Yes, my best friend IS in there. Strength from somewhere...

6/8

STELLA

D would tell me to make this quick and not get all mushy on her, so I'll try.  
(pause)

I guess it shouldn't matter that she didn't tell me right off that she was sick, but I'm pissed at you D for finally being able to do something you've never been able to do: keep a secret.

Wipes her eyes. Congregation is becoming a kaleidoscope. To D...

STELLA (cont'd)

Who's going to be my best friend now is what I want to know? We've got twenty years behind us.

(CONTINUED)

Stops. Voice cracking. Takes a sip of water.

STELLA (cont'd)  
That's a long time to love somebody.

Finds herself chuckling.

STELLA (cont'd)  
I hope you like it up there, D. Look  
for my Mama. She'll be near a bid  
whist game or cooking greens and  
hamhocks...

Some of the congregation laughs. Winston is the only  
person she can really see clearly. He knows this is  
painful, but you keep going, baby, I'll get you through  
this...

STELLA (cont'd)  
By the way, you know you still owe me  
\$162 and you never did return that  
Coach bag from Bergdorf's but it's all  
good. You keep it.

She's regaining her focus. Congregation is becoming sharp  
and clear. She addresses them now.

STELLA (cont'd)  
You guys should be so lucky. To ever  
have a friend half as cool and smart  
and ballsy and as crazy her.

And she points to the casket and turns to leave.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Stella walks outside after a slew of hugs from mourners.  
Winston is sitting on the ledge next to the top step  
waiting for her. She sits next to him and takes his hand.  
Rubs it. And he places his on top of hers.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Winston's on the floor with CHANTEL and QUINCY watching  
"Rug Rats" and eating Frosted Flakes straight from the  
box. Stella's packing. She looks over at him. Doesn't  
know quite how to broach this...

STELLA  
So.

(CONTINUED)



67

Winston turns. The look on her face holds his attention. The awkward, unsure nervousness he loves.

STELLA (cont'd)  
I hate packing.

He just nods.

STELLA (cont'd)  
But. Kids have to get back. I've gotta get on with my life. Whatever that is.

He nods again, supportive. Yes...?

STELLA (cont'd)  
...deal with my buy-out. Start looking for work, maybe. And...

And. She sighs. This takes guts.

STELLA (cont'd)  
We haven't talked about your...plans.  
I was just wond...

WINSTON  
What time does our plane leave?

Our plane? She zips the garment bag closed, stands there a few moments, looks down at him, and with a softness we haven't seen...

STELLA  
Four fifteen.

Yes. She said it. He's relieved and smiling deeply up at her. There is symmetry here. A connection has been made and she knows it. He's known it for a while now. And Stella's relieved to have finally given herself permission to acknowledge it, too.

WINSTON  
When does Quincy start school?

STELLA  
In a few weeks. Why?

He gets up and stops her from picking up the heavy garment bag by taking it and leaning it against the wall. He can tell she's not only used to doing everything for herself but doesn't know how to ask for help either.

(CONTINUED)

67

WINSTON

Would you mind if I drove him while  
I'm there?

She's surprised by the gesture, then decides to be  
playful...

STELLA

Do you know how to drive on the right  
side of the road?

WINSTON

It must be similar to driving on the  
left.

He's glad to see her spirits lift and decide to play  
along.

STELLA

Would you be bringing any tropical or  
fatal diseases to the states?

WINSTON

None that I'm aware of.

Stella disappears through a doorway and reenters the room  
backwards, pulling one of the kids' suitcases inside this  
one. Winston bends down to take it and is face to face  
with her.

STELLA

Ever had an occasion to kill anybody?

WINSTON

Only twice, but I served my time for  
those crimes already.

And he grabs the suitcase and pulls it over next to the  
other one.

STELLA

One last thing. Are you handy?

WINSTON

What do you mean by handy?

STELLA

Can you fix things?

He gives her a questioning look.

(CONTINUED)

67

STELLA (cont'd)

Name three things you can fix.

WINSTON

Bicycles. Cars. And pretty much anything that moves. Including you.

STELLA

Are you sure about that?

WINSTON

Oh yeah. So. Does this mean I get clearance?

STELLA

The jury's still out.

She's finished playing the game and so is he. Kind of a quiet moment, somewhat awkward for her which is why she goes into the closet to see if she forgot anything, and when she turns around, he's blocking the doorway.

WINSTON

I want you to know something Stella.

STELLA

What's that?

WINSTON

I love you very much.

The first time she's heard these words. She stares in his eyes, winds his arms around his neck. Murmurs...

STELLA

Jury just came in.

And kisses him right there in that closet.

---

INT. VANESSA'S DRIVEWAY - DUSK

As soon as the Airport Limo (town car) pulls into the driveway, Chantel and Quincy jump out the back seat carrying her stuff and run toward the WOODEN GATE.

STELLA

(yelling)

Tell your Mom we're tired as I-don't-know-what and I'll call her tomorrow. And please hurry up Quincy.

68  
1/4

(CONTINUED)

But the kids are already through the gate. Stella sits there tapping her finger nervously on the front seat. It's obvious something's going on: R&B MUSIC is BLARING from the backyard, SMOKE swirling into the sky and on the other side of the WOODEN FENCE the LOUD CHATTER and LAUGHTER of at least a dozen folks. Chantel runs back out.

CHANTEL

Mama's having everyone over for a BBQ, and she said she don't care how tired you are get your butt in here.

WINSTON

I'd like to meet your family.

STELLA

Well, uh...

Suddenly we see Vanessa running toward the car. She stands there like a cowboy, and puts her hands on her hips.

VANESSA

Where is he? We want to meet him!

Winston's laughing. What a first impression. Stella feels like backing out anyway but... Vanessa bends down and puts her face near the tinted glass. Knocks.

VANESSA (cont'd)

Winston? Are you in there baby?

Before he can respond, Stella lets down the window.

VANESSA (cont'd)

Well well well! Hi there Winston. As you can see I'm even more beautiful and brilliant than my sister, whatever her name is. Come on in! Get out of this car!

Before she can get the door open, Angela and a crowd of folks are coming toward them and surround the car. Stella lets her head fall onto the front seat, then throws her arms up: OKAY!

STELLA

First, let me warn you. Vanessa's a little outspoken, and can be downright tacky, really.

(CONTINUED)

68

WINSTON

I don't mind. I like her already.

STELLA

And Angela's Miss Goody Two-Shoes and her husband is white so don't be shocked.

WINSTON

Why would I be shocked? In Jamaica we don't take so much interest in color as you Americans do.

Whatever. As they're about to get out of the car, Quincy runs through the gate SHOUTING...

QUINCY

MOM! GUESS WHAT? DAD'S HERE!

Oh shit. Great. Just great. One big happy fucking family.

CUT TO:

EXT. VANESSA'S BACKYARD - DUSK

69

Bid Whist card game going strong! Picnic table full of food: BBQ Ribs, chicken; potato salad, coleslaw, baked beans, rolls, watermelon, beer, etc. Stella's not sure what to do, but Winston does. He heads straight for the food.

Stella hangs back, pleased he mingles so easily. Vanessa whispers loudly into her ear.

VANESSA

He is ~~too~~ fine, girl. Does he have any older brothers? What about his daddy? Is he happy with Moms or what?

STELLA

Shut up Vanessa. We're gonna have to eat and run. We're tired. I want to go home and sleep in my own bed.

VANESSA

I BET you do, girl.

(off Stella's smile)

After what you just went through with Delilah, it's good to see you smile.

Vanessa surprises her with a bear hug. As they finally let go, Walter arrives.

(CONTINUED)

4/8

STELLA

Hi Walter. Nice to see you. What are you doing here? Spying?

WALTER

In town on business.

STELLA

Mm-hm.

WALTER

(the truth is:)

I ran here as fast as I could just to see how miserable you are.

Stella curtsies. Good natured sarcasm runs deep between these two.

WALTER

You look worse than I've seen you in years. So what's going on? How's everything with the lawsuit? You need something to tide you over?

STELLA

I'm fine, but thanks for asking.

WALTER

What about my son? Does he like this guy? Do you like this guy? He is kinda cute. And tall.

STELLA

Go say hello, he won't bite.

WALTER

Yeah? Well I'll be the only thing he doesn't, look at that plate.

With mischief and a touch of malice in his eyes, he starts away. She warns:

STELLA

Don't start no mess won't be no mess.

---

MOMENTS LATER - ANGELA

in a maternity dress, holding her husband KENNEDY'S hand, walks over toward Winston, who has found an empty lawn chair right next to UNCLE OLLIE, 70s, asleep and SNORING.

(CONTINUED)

---

Kennedy is JFKish in dockers and polo. Angela's already given Winston the once twice over.

ANGELA

Hello, Winston. I'm Angela and this is my husband Kennedy.

WINSTON

I've heard a lot about you Angela. Nice to meet you. And you as well Kennedy. Stella tells me you're brewing two of them in there, hey?

KENNEDY

Yes. Both boys. Due in December.

WINSTON

I can't wait to meet them.

Really?

ANGELA

Are you planning to come back at Christmas? Or you're staying forever?

Winston laughs so it must be a joke. In the background, Walter is circling, watching, very vulture-like.

WINSTON

I don't know what I'm going to do actually. I was admitted to med school, but right now I can't seem to get behind the idea of seven or eight more years of school, if you know what I mean.

KENNEDY

I felt the same way after undergrad.

Angela doesn't want to be but is impressed. Uncle Ollie wakes up. Where am I? Turns toward Winston, looks at his face then at his long legs.

UNCLE OLLIE

Quincy? You growing like a weed ain't you boy? Would you go get your Uncle Ollie a scotch and soda? I'm so thirsty I can't hardly swallow.

ANGELA

I'll get it for you Uncle Ollie.

But Winston's already on the way.

(CONTINUED)

70  
cont.

WINSTON

I don't mind. Uncle Ollie needs a drink.

Angela watches him go, wants not to like him, but having a hard time.

UNCLE OLLIE

How old is that boy now?

ANGELA

Apparently old enough, Uncle O.

UNCLE OLLIE

Baby, go fix Uncle O a plate since you ain't doing nothing but standing there getting fat.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

Folks are dancing. Stella and Winston, in sync with that island rhythm, get props from everybody on the floor. Walter drags Vanessa out there and tries to compete with Winston, but he does not have the funk. Finally the two couples have danced into each other's path.

WALTER

Hello Winston, I'm Walter.

WINSTON

Nice to meet you Walter.

Enough said, they dance on and suddenly without even knowing why she's saying it, Stella blurts out...

STELLA

I love you Winston.

She immediately regrets saying it. And then she doesn't. They begin a slow dance to a fast song.

BID WHIST TABLE:

Folks are LOUD and throwing cards onto the table that FLY onto the floor. Drinks getting low. Everybody having FUN. Stella squeezes between both sisters...

ANGELA

...I'm not saying he's not nice. I'm not saying he's not educated. What I'm  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



ANGELA (cont'd)  
saying is you can't possibly think  
this is going anywhere.

VANESSA  
Shut the fuck up Angela.

STELLA  
No, let her finish.

ANGELA  
Bringing him home is a big mistake and  
it's only gonna make it harder on you  
and on him when you have to end this.

There's a little silence now and tension is rising.

VANESSA  
Anyway let me just put the shit on out  
there: I don't care how old the dude  
is: if he makes you glow like this,  
it's cool with me. I say keep him.

Sincerely...

UNCLE OLLIE  
I agree.

Even though he doesn't know what the hell they're talking  
about.

STELLA  
Thank you Uncle.

ANGELA  
I'd still watch my back if I were you.

VANESSA  
(to Angela)  
Yeah yeah yeah...  
(laughing now at Stella)  
...turnt out by a -- how old is he?

Stella gives her the finger. Everybody laughs. Stella  
looks up and sees:

Winston and Walter underneath a tree, with their heads  
together and obviously talking about her.

ANGLE... close on the guys.

(CONTINUED)

72A

WALTER

...well, she can be that way. But her heart's always in the right place, even when her smart mouth isn't.

He looks at the kid.

WALTER (cont'd)

But I guess you know that.

WINSTON

Yessir, I do.

A nice moment for them.

WALTER

When she gets high and mighty, you just snap right back at her. She needs a man to stand up for himself.

WINSTON

(smiles)

Did that work for you?

WALTER

Hell no.

They both LAUGH. And we CUT BACK to...

ANGLE... Stella, watching them.

STELLA

(shouts)

Hey, break that mess up!

---

INT. STELLA'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Before they can get out of the car, Quincy jumps out of the car to the backyard gate where Phoenix is panting. Let's him out. They're right behind Winston when Stella opens the kitchen door. Winston sets the two suitcases down while Stella looks around, trying to imagine how he's going to feel here.

WINSTON

Wow. This is some kitchen.

(pause)

And this is where you live.

The kitchen is stainless steel, celery, goldenrod, and the floor is black slate.

(CONTINUED)

73  
3/4

73  
cont

STELLA

Yep. This is home.

Quincy runs up to Winston and takes him by the arm.

QUINCY

I'll give you a tour. Come on Winston.

Winston's okay with this, but is it okay with you?

STELLA

Fine. Go. But your room's not on the tour until it gets clean.

But they're already running up the stairs. Stella smiles.  
Let the boys bond.

CUT TO:

FAMILY ROOM:

Quincy and the dog are breezing through as Winston trails...

QUINCY

Okay. As you can see this is the family room. I always get this end of the couch when we have movie night. Oh. And all the weird stuff you see in here, my mom made it: that chair and table over there. Even this couch.

He sits on the sofa, a mixture of suede leather and fake pony and metal.

WINSTON

Your mom's pretty talented.

QUINCY

Yeah. All my friends love our house. They think it's so cool.

WINSTON

It is cool.

QUINCY

Come. Let me show you my mom's office. It's weird too.

As they go down the hallway, Quincy points out various grotesque but lovely 'museum pieces'...

(CONTINUED)

74

5/8

74 cont

QUINCY

I made that at camp last year and that clay hand right there when I was real little. Like seven or something.

Oh. Winston's grinning. Afraid to touch this stuff.

CUT TO:

OFFICE:

Winston looks down.

75

QUINCY

Oh you won't believe it but this floor is actually leather. Smelled like bacon in here for the longest.

Winston chuckles. Takes a whiff. Looks around at all the books, computers, desk. She really does work in here.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Okay, now I'll show you my mom's and your room.

Winston's a little surprised he's so comfortable about this idea. Quincy pushes open the doors. Winston is blown away. Butter yellow walls, purple-heart wood floors, lush plants, big platform bed, artwork, etc.

6/8

QUINCY (cont'd)

It's sorta cozy in here I guess if you like this split pea soup look, but at least you'll have a good view of the pool. See.

Winston brushes his hands over Quincy's head, and they walk over to the french doors together and look out.

WINSTON

Wow. This is amazing.

Quincy opens the doors. Walks past the pool towards a little guest house.

CUT TO:

GUEST HOUSE/STUDIO:

Quincy pushes the door open. It's a dusty mess in here: cobwebs, tools, bolts of fabric, sheets of various metals, drawing board, etc.

76

8

(CONTINUED)

QUINCY

This used to be where my mom made all her stuff. My mom said she might turn it back into a guest house and if so I'm thinking of moving out here when I'm like 15. For more privacy.

Winston's shaking his head but also looking around slowly. This is sad to him.

WINSTON

How long has it been since she's been out here?

QUINCY

I don't know. Years. Oh, that's where my mom works out. Over there. I'm not allowed in there by myself. You look like you maybe could use more definition. Hey! Maybe we could work out together sometime. You think?

Winston looks down at his arms. They're a bit lean.

WINSTON

I suppose so, dude.

Quincy stops. Looks around.

QUINCY

Well, tours over. Unless you wanna see my go-cart?

Winston throws his arms over Quincy's shoulders.

WINSTON

Thanks Quincy, but how about in the morning?

QUINCY

Fine, but not too early.

Winston's tone changes as if talking to an adult...

WINSTON

Hey. I just want to thank you for being so cool about my being here.

Quincy appreciates this, but doesn't quite know how to answer.

(CONTINUED)

QUINCY

Cool. See ya.

And saunters off.

CUT TO:

MASTER BATHROOM:

Winston walks in and stands in the doorway. He is watching Stella pull her pony tail holder off and shake out her braids. She is even more beautiful to him right now in her own bathroom which is snazzy: seafoam green and rust walls; black tub and toilet; two cobalt blue glass sinks. Didn't come in here on the tour. Plants, bath salts, oils and candles abound, etc.

WINSTON

So you do have a romantic side. I was beginning to wonder.

She looks up and gives him a soft smile.

WINSTON (cont'd)

Finally, my very own sink.

STELLA

(playful)

Maybe. Maybe not.

She turns and goes back out into the bedroom, stands at the French door. He knows she's nervous, approaches her carefully.

WINSTON

Having second thoughts?

STELLA

About what?

WINSTON

My being here.

STELLA

It's kinda weird.

WINSTON

Well don't panic. You're not stuck with me. Actually I can leave in the morning if you want me to.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA  
No.

WINSTON  
Who knows. Maybe I'll get tired of  
you first!

He laughs as his arms drape over her and squeeze.

STELLA  
In your next life, buddy.

---

INT. KITCHEN - SAME NIGHT

Winston is pulling Stella by the hand.

STELLA  
What are we doing in here? I'm not  
hungry and you couldn't possibly be.

WINSTON  
Hush.

He already has a stool pulled in front of the deep sink  
where he sits her down and presses her shoulders down  
gently. He turns on the water. Sprinkles just enough  
over her hair...

STELLA  
What in the world...

Reaches for the shampoo, squeezes enough to fill his  
large palms, then slides his fingers through a mound of  
braids and begins to massage Stella's scalp until we see  
white lather rising.

STELLA (cont'd)  
Hnnnn.

She is enjoying this. And so is Winston. Both close  
their eyes. He's getting pleasure making her feel good,  
and when he pulls the silver chord attached to the nozzle  
and changes it to a soft spray, it's like a waterfall  
cascading over Stella's hair. She does not want him to  
stop. He doesn't. For quite some time...

---

INT. BEDROOM - 2 A.M.

Winston rolls over to put his arms around Stella but  
she's not there. He opens his eyes. Where is she?  
Wonders if something could be wrong. Listens to the

(CONTINUED)

silence, and then gets up and walks to the doorway which leads to the hallway...

WINSTON

Stella, where you are?

No response. But then he hears her CRYING. To his right he sees her through the glass doors sitting behind her desk, her head pressed against her hands...

CUT TO:

OFFICE:

He walks in quietly - not sure what's happened but whatever it is - he's here. He goes over and stands behind her, places his hands on her shoulders...

WINSTON

Are you alright?

She nods yes.

WINSTON (cont'd)

Is there anything I can do?

Stella shakes her head no then yes and reaches for his hand and squeezes it. She is thankful he's here. She looks toward the window hoping to stop the tears, but more come...

STELLA

I wish I could call her. She was my best friend. Since forever. And that's a long time to forget.

WINSTON

You don't have to.

And he kisses the top of her head. Continues to comfort her. For as long as it takes...

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - DUSK

Here's two long lines for two different films. One is obviously for mature audiences; but the one Stella and Winston are standing in is full of teenagers. Stella's gaze wanders over to the other line: Lord knows I should be over there. But. It's okay. When she turns her attention back to Winston, two FINE young GIRLS in HIPHUGGERS and CROP-TOPS are flirting with him. He's enjoying the attention. Stella twists her mouth to the side, not so much from jealousy, but feeling a bit

(CONTINUED)



insecure; somewhat out of place. Winston's in the right line. She's in the wrong one. Doesn't blame those girls, they probably think I'm his mother. But I'm not so...

STELLA

Thanks for taking Quincy to little league practice.

WINSTON

No problem. You know I don't mind.

As the line begins to move, Winston takes Stella's hand and clutches it like she's his girlfriend. The young girls notice this, and after taking a few seconds to register what's going on, they give Stella the thumbs up - that Spice Girl's 'Girl Power!' look.

CUT TO:

INSIDE MOVIE THEATRE:

Everyone in this theatre is cracking up, including Winston. However, Stella sits next to him with this look: this shit is not even close to funny. What the fuck am I doing in here with these adolescents? Looks at Winston who is oblivious to her he's so into the movie, and now: How many more years of this will I have to put up with? Thank God for popcorn which she begins to eat, one kernel at a time.

LATER:

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Stella's arms are around Winston's waist, his arms draped over her shoulders and they're laughing, leaving the theatre when...

ANGELA

Stella! We didn't see you guys in line.

Turning around they see Angela and Kennedy and a STRIKING guy, late 40s, with a SEXY woman, mid-30s. It's clear that Stella doesn't know them, but who in the world is he? Tries not to stare.

STELLA

Hi. We were all the way in back.

(CONTINUED)

83  
cont

ANGELA

Oh, forgive me. Judge Spencer Boyle  
and Leslie James, this is my sister  
Stella.

Judge looks Stella dead in the eye, so much we can see  
how uncomfortable Stella is by the contact.

JUDGE BOYLE

So nice to finally meet you Stella.

LESLIE

(British accent)

How do you do?

And they all shake. Stella turns to Winston who seems to  
have been forgotten and is standing there patiently...

ANGELA

Oh, and that's Winston. Anybody  
hungry?

Stella shakes her head no, and is taken aback by the rude  
manner in which Angela introduced Winston. But this is  
not the place to say anything. Winston doesn't catch any  
of it and is busy shaking hands.

WINSTON

Hello. How you doing there Kennedy?

KENNEDY

Just grateful for an aisle seat.  
Those trips to the ladies room can get  
to you.

ANGELA

(to Stella)

Did you cry at the end or what?

WINSTON

(pointing to the poster)  
We saw that one.

ANGELA

You're kidding.

Not quite defensive.

STELLA

It was hilarious.

(CONTINUED)

JUDGE BOYLE

Well, we're going to be heading home.  
Nice meeting you both. The offer still  
stands, Stella. If you ever change  
your mind about running, give me a  
call.

WINSTON

We'd like that.

The judge blinks. Not quite what he'd meant. But, he  
smiles, nods. Angela's mouth is open but closes it  
quickly enough. They all head off in opposite  
directions...

As they go, Winston takes Stella's hand.

WINSTON (cont'd)

(quietly)

Sorry if I embarrassed you.

But he doesn't sound sorry. He stares at the ground.  
Looks angry, if anything.

STELLA

Embarrassed me, how?

WINSTON

By just being there.

He means that. All she can say is...

STELLA

Shut up, before you pluck my last  
nerve.

And gives him a make-up squeeze. But his eyes don't  
change. And she's still busted.

---

INT. ANGELA'S KITCHEN - DAY

Angela's in her Martha Stewart kitchen, preparing some  
elaborate meal for dinner - cookbook the works. Stella  
knocks on the door and enters without being asked.

STELLA

Surprise.

ANGELA

I'll say. What brings you all the way  
over here? And without calling? Were  
you at the mall?

(CONTINUED)

STELLA

No I was not at the mall.

Angela knows something's wrong by her tone. It's her boyfriend and she's come to confide. She's ready to be Oprah. Stella leans against the counter.

ANGELA (cont'd)

Sit.

STELLA

I don't feel like sitting. I just want you to know that I didn't appreciate the way you totally dissed Winston yesterday.

Angela stops chopping, but grips her butcher knife.

ANGELA

What are you talking about?

STELLA

(imitating Angela)

'Oh, and that's Winston.' Like he's some non-entity. Or a child or something.

ANGELA

Well he is.

STELLA

He's my boyfriend, Angela.

Resumes her chopping with more determination now.

ANGELA

So what was I supposed to do, get out the trumpets?

STELLA

Look. Let me just say this once. I like him. You don't have to. And he's gonna be here until whenever so you might as well get used to it.

ANGELA

I don't have to get used to anything.

STELLA

You're right. But. If my memory serves me correctly, didn't Mama raise us to show everybody courtesy and respect?

(CONTINUED)

84  
Cont

ANGELA  
I haven't shown him any disrespect.

STELLA  
Did anybody dog Kennedy or make him  
feel the least bit uncomfortable when  
he walked into our family?

Angela shakes her head no.

STELLA  
Well then. Show mine the same fucking  
courtesy. He may not be 30 or 40 years  
old, but he's still a man. So treat  
him like one.

ANGELA  
Don't tell me about my problem with  
his age, you're the one who seems to  
be self-conscious about it.

STELLA  
I am not.

ANGELA  
Well you came all the way over here  
just to whine about it.

Maybe she has a point.

STELLA  
So.

ANGELA  
So. I'm sorry if I was rude. I didn't  
mean to be.

Can see Stella accepts her apology. But more on her mind.

ANGELA (cont'd)  
Aren't you just a little nervous about  
this whole thing?

STELLA  
Of course I am.

Throws up her hands like let's change the subject...

STELLA (cont'd)  
Whatever that is, can I taste it?

(CONTINUED)

ANGELA

Sure. But give me your honest opinion...

She stuffs something into Stella's mouth. It's not good. But Stella smiles anyway.

---

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Stella and a group of six people - all in their 40s - are seated around the dining room table, into a HEATED discussion. Dinner's finished. They're having wine and coffee. One seat is EMPTY. Winston's missing in action.

WOMAN ONE

I think the whole idea of allowing African-American children to get away with speaking improper English is atrocious...

GUY ONE

No it isn't. Our background is just as valid as every other ethnic group, so why not validate it?

WOMAN TWO

Okay. But what are they supposed to do when it comes to college? And how about the job market? Will they be able to use their ebonistic language there?

GUY TWO

It's another form of oppression and once again, we're the last to get it.

She agrees as she leans back, and looks at the empty chair.

WOMAN ONE

Is Winston okay? Is he sick, you think?

STELLA

I'm not sure. I'll go see.

---

CUT TO:

FAMILY ROOM:

And she gets up, heads into the kitchen, where she immediately spots Winston sprawled out on the family room

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

86  
cont.

floor playing VIDEO GAMES with Quincy and Justin (he is or should be white), Quincy's buddy. They're having a jolly-good time. Stella's a little pissed at this sight. Clears her throat. Winston looks like a child who's been busted by his mom.

STELLA

Is this how you learned to be sociable in Jamaica?

He's embarrassed now.

WINSTON

No.

STELLA

Then why am I in there and you're in here?

WINSTON

I didn't want to be rude to your guests, but their whole conversation about Ebonics was getting on my nerves.

STELLA

Really?

WINSTON

Yes. They just seem to be talking to hear themselves talk.

STELLA

Oh, but this is better. Playing Doom with Quincy.

WINSTON

As a matter of fact, yeah.

STELLA

Let me tell you something. What's rude is for the man whose supposed to be with me to leave me alone with our guests.

She is pissed. Winston turns to Quincy. Pats him on the shoulder.

WINSTON

She's right. Catch you later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He rises slowly. Still annoyed, Stella walks out of the room without waiting for him. Winston shrugs at Quincy and follows her.

INT. SAUSALITO RESTAURANT - DAY

Winston's sitting at the table alone. He's looking at the check. Takes out his wallet and starts counting his money. Stella returns from the ladies room and out of sheer habit, takes her Gold Amex card out and lays it on top of the bill.

WINSTON

It's okay. I'll get it tonight.

STELLA

You don't have to.

WINSTON

I want to. Why should you always have to pay for everything?

STELLA

Because you can't afford it.

WINSTON

(irritated)

You want me to be your man, let me act like it once in a while.

STELLA

Fine! Pay the mortgage this month while you're at it! Why'd you have to start this?

WINSTON

I think you've got that backwards! You're the one who has to have everything your way or no way at all. You're the one who has to be in control all the time or you don't know what to do with yourself!

STELLA

You're turning this around so I'm the one who's defensive because your masculinity is threatened when I pick up a check?

WINSTON

You can't decide whether you want me to be a kid or a man.

(CONTINUED)



87  
Cont.

STELLA

Please! From the same guy who came back from a midnight run to the video store with Booty Call and Lion King?!

He looks down at his hand still resting on the check. She can see he's angry.

STELLA (cont'd)

What?

WINSTON

I just don't want to keep looking over my shoulder all the time to see if you're confusing me with Quincy because we have different tastes in movies or junk food or rollerblading versus your BMW.

STELLA

If it weren't true, you wouldn't have to worry about it.

He says nothing. Just stares at her.

STELLA

Look. This is ridiculous. Pay the damn bill.

Winston smiles.

WINSTON

Pay it yourself.

She sighs. Tucks her gold card inside the leather bill holder.

STELLA

Winston, I don't want to fight.

He nods.

WINSTON

(softly)

I'll get the car.

She watches him walk away. Is this more trouble than it's worth?

INT. BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

They're in bed. Backs to each other. Opposite sides of the bed.

DISSOLVE: LATER

They haven't moved. Winston sighs. Climbs out of bed. Walks around to her side and crouches down, his face inches from hers. Her eyes POP open. She hasn't been sleeping either.

WINSTON

I'm sorry.

STELLA

You were right, sort of.

WINSTON

So were you.

STELLA

I didn't mean to go off like that.

WINSTON

Come. I want to show you something.

And he pulls the covers off and takes her by the hand, leads her toward the french doors and outside...

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO

Windows have brown paper covering them. Can't see in. He takes the key from his pocket and unlocks the door.

STELLA

What have you done, Winston?

He pushes the door open. This place has been transformed. Fabric bolts now have their own bins, as do the METALS. It's a REAL studio again. She's almost afraid to walk inside, but Winston eases her in.

STELLA

I don't believe this. When did you...  
How di...?

WINSTON

While you were snoring. While you were shopping. While you were running.

(CONTINUED)

STELLA

I don't snore. What's that?

And she walks over and realizes it's a new sander. Busy looking around at how awesome is is in here. Touches something, steps back.

STELLA (cont'd)

I don't believe this.

WINSTON

Now you can come in here and make a cracked glass table or a zebra sofa or anything you want until daylight and nobody's gonna bother you.

She walks around, taking everything in, touching everything. Turns around and looks at him.

STELLA

Thank you.

He nods. No smile. And now he doesn't look like a kid at all.

WINSTON

You're quite welcome.

And she walks over and kisses him.

---

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Stella's sitting next to her lawyer, across from the CORPORATE BOSS, Isaac, their lawyers, and a few other HOT SHOTS. Corporate boss clears his throat.

ISAAC

...what we're trying to say is that in your absence, it's become quite clear to us how important you are to the company as a whole.

Stella's lawyer scowls, as if he senses he's gaining leverage.

ISAAC (cont'd)

We don't want to lose you, Stella. We want you to come back as Executive V.P.. \$275,000 to start. Plus incentives.

(CONTINUED)

## STELLA'S LAWYER

Those numbers won't work and we can't even begin the discussion without a seat on the board and her name on...

## STELLA

...you know what guys. The package you're offering is very generous. But I'm also aware -- and I'm sure each of you are too -- that some of our biggest clients have left the company.

## HOT SHOT

That's not altogether true.

## STELLA

Oh I think it is. And let's be honest, here. Several of them called to tell me how much they appreciated my brand of service and asked where I was going so they could continue our relationship.

## CORPORATE BOSS

There's been a few clients who panicked prematurely. What's your point?

## STELLA

I'll put it this way. I could go to one of your competitors and bring my clients with me. And that's the leverage that Neil here would be using to drive your offer up.

She leans back in her chair.

## STELLA

But what I'm thinking is this: it's the clients who have shown me loyalty. That's something I could never expect from you anymore. And I don't see why things would be better at some other shop.

They don't get where she's heading with this.

## STELLA (cont'd)

So. I'm gonna represent these clients. On my own.

(CONTINUED)

These guys are looking as if it'll never work. Thought she was smarter than this.

STELLA (cont'd)

Maybe I won't make the megabucks you guys are offering. But then again. Maybe I will.

The men are looking at each other. But Isaac just looks at Stella.

HOT SHOT

Why don't you take a few days to think this over, Stella? We don't want to see you burning any bridges you might regret later on.

STELLA'S LAWYER

That's actually not a bad idea, St...

ISAAC

She knows what she's doing fellas.  
(to Stella)  
Good luck, darlin'.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Winston cross-legged on the floor of the garage. He has taken Quincy's bike apart and is fixing it, making deft use of the tools from an elaborate tool box. Quincy sits nearby, watching. There is something on his mind. Finally...

QUINCY

Can we have a talk? Kind of man-to-man?

Winston looks up.

WINSTON

I don't see any kids around. So that's the only way we can do it.

And waits. What's on your mind? But Quincy is trying to get this just right.

QUINCY

You know my Mom likes you.

WINSTON

I hope she d...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

91A

QUINCY

I mean, I've seen her with guys  
before. But she really likes you.

Quincy is very serious. So Winston is serious, too.

WINSTON

(quietly)  
So what's up?

Well...

QUINCY

You wouldn't ever, like... break her  
heart or anything.

Winston stunned by the words. The sincerity, the passion  
in them.

QUINCY (cont'd)

'Cause if you ever did. You'd have to  
deal with me.

So touching, it almost brings tears to Winston's eyes.  
What a kid.

WINSTON

Let me tell you something, Quincy. As  
long as your Mom has you watching her  
back...

A smile. A real one.

WINSTON (cont'd)

...she's got no worries. Of any kind.

---

EXT. STELLA'S BACKYARD - THAT AFTERNOON

Stella is looking for Winston, needs to talk, to unload a  
mountain of second thoughts. She finds him in the studio,  
painting a bookcase, listening to REGGAE turned up loud.

STELLA

Hi.

He turns the music down.

WINSTON

Hello there, you're back so soon.  
How'd it go?

(CONTINUED)

92

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92  
cont

STELLA  
I can't believe what I just did.

WINSTON  
What?

STELLA  
I don't even want to talk about it.

WINSTON  
They offered your job back. And you turned them down. Didn't you?

She says nothing. Obviously, he's right.

WINSTON (cont'd)  
You know how I know that?

STELLA  
Cause you know me so well.

WINSTON  
Because I know you're smart. Because I know you have guts. Because I knew you'd do the right thing. And you did.

He reaches out his hand. Come over here.

STELLA  
You don't get it. I was just running my mouth about how I can do it on my own but how am I supposed to actually do it? I mean am I supposed to sit at home with my computers and my six little clients with no support system whatsoever and wind up back in the job market in six months? This is crazy!

WINSTON  
No it's not. Your business is gonna work great and you're gonna have time for yourself. Spend some time in here making things and having fun again.

STELLA  
Fun? Oh sweetie listen ... I can't sit out here and be Demi Moore in dappled light. That's not the real world.

(CONTINUED)

92  
cont

WINSTON

You're just feeling a little panicked  
right now. Everything's gonna be fine.

Stella feels the chasm of their differences more than  
ever before.

WINSTON (cont'd)

And who knows, maybe when you start  
making furniture again, people will  
buy it.

STELLA

Who said anything about selling it?

WINSTON

I'm just dreaming out loud for you.

He's such a child. And she's such an impatient anxious  
too-serious-all-the-time-grownup...

STELLA

While you're dreaming I've got a  
million calls to make. I need a web  
site, a company name, letterhead...

WINSTON

But not today.

---

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Quiet place. Candlelight. CLOSE on Stella as she's  
picking at her dessert.

WINSTON (O.S)

You want to talk about it?

See him now. Concern for her. And maybe for himself.

STELLA

We've been talking about it all week.

He nods. They have. But...

WINSTON

But it's not just about your work is  
it?

She sighs.

STELLA

What else would it be?

93

3/4

(CONTINUED)



93  
Cont

But they both know. He reaches into this pocket and puts a small box on the table.

WINSTON

I bought you something.

STELLA

Winston, you didn't have to get me a present.

WINSTON

It's not exactly a present.

Now she doesn't understand. Looks between his eyes and the box as she unwraps it. Inside is a ring box, and she opens it to find...

.....a simple gold band.

Her eyes swim with feelings. More than she could ever sort through.

STELLA

You know, Winston... people can be together and love each other... for a long time before they ever even think about doing something like this...

WINSTON

(softly)

It's a simple question. It just takes a yes or a no.

She looks in his eyes.

STELLA

Baby, I'm gonna have to think about this.

---

INT. BEDROOM - SAME NIGHT

Winston and Stella are making love. Tenderly. Beautifully. As if they may need to remember this for the rest of their lives.

---

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

NIGHT

Winston is sound asleep. PAN from him to see Stella in her robe, arms across her chest, looking out through the window. Her face is tense. We see her struggle. She turns. Looks down at him. We can almost feel her heart hurting.

94  
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96

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Winston's sprawled out in the hammock. Looks up when he sees Stella standing over him. Her face is tender and nervous and determined all at once. He studies this.

WINSTON

You really are beautiful.

Don't. Please. This is already hard enough...

STELLA

Winston. We have to talk.

WINSTON

(sighs)

I know. Climb in.

She gazes down at him, but doesn't move.

STELLA

I bought this thing for Quincy. I don't like the feeling of falling.

WINSTON

You mean you don't like feeling out of control. But come on in anyway.

He takes her gently by the wrist.

WINSTON (cont'd)

Don't worry. I won't let you fall.

And he rolls her INTO the hammock so that her back is against his chest. He wraps his arms around her. In her ear...

WINSTON (cont'd)

(softly)

I need to talk to you, too.

She's somewhat surprised to hear him say this.

STELLA

About what?

WINSTON

You can go first.

STELLA

No, you. Please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Okay. He looks nervous. Takes a long deep breath, drums his fingers on her arm...

WINSTON

Well. I've been thinking about a lot of the things you've been saying.

What's he talking about?

STELLA

What things?

Her eyes stare blankly.

WINSTON

I can see that you've got a lot of worries in your life right now without figuring me into the picture.

See her confusion. It almost sounds as if...

WINSTON (cont'd)

I mean, a real man - the kind you deserve - should be able to make things easier for you.

STELLA

You're not adding to my troubles if that's what you're thinking, Winston.

WINSTON

I'm not saying that. But let's face it Stella: you should have a man in your life who's already a success. Who's paying his share of the bills and not freeloading.

She draws a breath. Whew.

STELLA

(real quiet)

I can pay my own bills. And you're not freeloading.

WINSTON

You know what I'm saying. But I'll be honest. I'm tired of watching you pull out your credit card everytime we go out.

(CONTINUED)

96  
Cont.

STELLA

Winston. You're 20 years old. How successful could you possibly be? The only way guys your age have money is if it was inherited...

She's surprised to be saying all this, but now that she thinks about it...

STELLA (cont'd)

...money is a sad reason for people to be together. Or to be apart.

WINSTON

Yes, but without it, life is hard.

Sighs. Deep breath. Out with it.

WINSTON

But there's also our age difference.

STELLA

Yes, that's never gonna change.

WINSTON

It doesn't bother me at all, but I can see it bothers you. And I can't imagine what I'd have to do to convince you that no matter how many young girls I may notice, you're the woman I want. I was hoping to be your husband and that one day we would have kids. But I see now that could never work.

She knows the weight of her response.

STELLA

Probably not.

WINSTON

You have a son and a mortgage and a career. I'm nowhere yet. And I'm not satisfied with that.

STELLA

It's coming. Don't worry, you'll find your way.

He kisses her head from behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

96  
Cont

WINSTON

Look, I've realized that I didn't accept the offer for med school because I didn't think I could do as well as he did. And now I know it doesn't matter what he did. I'm heading home on the 10 o'clock flight.

STELLA

Home?

WINSTON

Yes, home.

STELLA

Why so soon?

WINSTON

I think it's easier this way.

They hold on for dear life. Her eyes are CLOSED but full of tears. But she is not alone.

---

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Winston's bags are at the curb. The dog is sitting next to them. A CAB pulls into the driveway and HONKS. Winston and Quincy race out from the back laughing, Stella emerges through the garage.

97

QUINCY

So should I call you Doctor Shakespeare?

WINSTON

Not unless you want to die. You take good care of your Mom, you hear me now?

QUINCY

No worries Mon.

Quincy gives him a hug and takes off inside.

QUINCY (cont'd)

I'll be over to visit you, with or without Moms.

WINSTON

You better.

Winston bends down and rubs Phoenix briskly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WINSTON (cont'd)

Lay off those pig ears, hey boy, and  
start jogging with Stella here.

She manages a small smile. Phoenix races after Quincy.

WINSTON (cont'd)

I'm gonna be going now.

STELLA

I can see that.

He's biting his lip about now, but bends down and gives  
her a big long hug and punctuates it with their standard  
God-I-Love-Kissing-You kiss. Both of them are pretty  
fucked up at this point, but it's Stella who has the  
strength to step away.

STELLA (cont'd)

Go.

He gets in, rolls down the window for one last word.

WINSTON

I love you.

She knows the feeling, but all she can do is wave as they  
pull off. Oh yeah, there's the mailbox. There must be  
mail in there that requires her immediate attention.  
Yes. Let's get the mail.

---

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Winston's cab arrives at the airport. He still can't  
shake this sense of loss.

---

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Pulling up at the gate, Winston is amazed to see Stella  
standing by her overworked BMW, waiting for him. He  
quickly gets out and moves toward her. Is something  
wrong? But her eyes stop him in his tracks. They are  
both nervous and thrilled and terrified in the same  
instant.

STELLA

Ever consider UC Berkeley?

Passersby are envious and wondering how their bodies are  
able to curl dip slide ride and waltz into and against  
the other with apparently little or no effort.

97  
cont.

5/8

1/8 98

99

2/8

THREE YEARS LATER ...

IMAGES from a FAMILY PICNIC on the bluff where Stella ran in the opening, but this time we reveal the majestic red-clay spires of the Golden Gate in pristine glory. The sisters are there, with kids and mates. Chantel has a boyfriend, Quincy has peach fuzz. Uncle Ollie is still kicking strong. Stella and Winston's 14 month old son WILLIAM (Shakespeare!) has everyone enthralled.

FADE OUT.

SCRIPT FLY